WINTER SHADOWS OF THE DREAM GARDEN

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To the children
shattered by their parents'
conflicts and separations.

All happy families are alike;
each unhappy family
is unhappy in its own way.

Leo Tolstoy

If there's a book that you want to read,
but it hasn't been written yet,
then you must write it.

Toni Morrison

Library

He entered this library—one he had passed by for so many years but never once stepped into—with a sense of unease. The attendant at the door asked for his ID and even his age, something he found unnecessary for a library. To him, libraries had always been sanctuaries of silence and peace. *"What's the point of all this?"* he thought to himself. He had only come in to escape the rain.

He couldn't recall ever seeing so many people going in and out of this very old building. A strange thought crossed his mind: novels waiting to be written were lining up at the entrance of this building. He was being absurd again.

He remembered passing by here on a holiday night and seeing two elderly men standing at the door, smoking anxiously, while a young woman tried to push them away from the building. The girl was in a panic; they were arguing, and through her tears she was trying to drive the old men away.

He recalled, with a shiver, that he had seen this building in his dreams. Perhaps because of the overcast sky, the façade—now darkened—had taken on a strange allure he had never noticed before. As he approached the grand entrance, adorned with symbols he had never paid attention to until that day, the шум of the city faded into an uncanny silence, and once he stepped inside the library, time itself seemed to slow down.

It smelled wonderful here. As Heather Brewer once said, *"No place smells quite like a library—of books, dust, and happy solitude."*

In a recurring dream, he had been told that libraries were gateways to infinity, and so he had entered partly out of curiosity, partly out of fear. Otherwise, he himself was astonished at how he had managed to step into this place—one he had never once entered in all these years—under the simple pretext of escaping the rain.

Then, all at once, he found himself in a dim interior with an impossibly high ceiling, filled with countless tables stretching almost into infinity—a place, just as that writer had described, of dust and happy solitude.

For years, he had never truly noticed that such a vast library existed so close to him—one lit, as in the movies, by green-shaded desk lamps. He felt he could escape all his fears—above all, the fear of being left penniless—as well as all his loneliness and all his absurdities, and take refuge here. In truth, he longed to have a room here, a place where he could sleep and wake, where he could live within the library itself.

Contrary to what he had hoped, the place felt like a bottomless well. Only a faint light filtered in through the high windows; the smell of dust and books, combined with a silence deep enough to ring in one's ears, was enough to make it utterly different. It was like the event horizon of a black hole—an unknown threshold that could swallow everything. One more step, and it felt as though a vortex would seize him and pull him into an infinity he could not comprehend. Strangely, no one was reading at the tables. When he noticed someone sitting far away at a table in the depths, barely visible in the darkness, Mr. G began to walk toward him. The distance between them seemed endless.

After walking for a while, he finally drew close to a tall, thin man with sparse hair parted down the middle, round wire-rimmed glasses, a black tailcoat, and a bow tie. It was as if some force from within a black hole had stretched and elongated him. This must be the librarian. What could he possibly say? If he admitted, "I only came in to escape the rain," the man might reply, "Could you not find anywhere else?" He needed another excuse.

Mr. G thought he felt intimidated by the thin, austere librarian, yet he gathered his courage and said, "Excuse me, I'm looking for a book. Could you check if it's here?" The man seemed entirely absorbed in the large ledger before him. Lifting his head from the massive, black-bound volume, he looked directly at Mr. G. At that very moment, Mr. G began to understand why people did not come to this library. The librarian's gaze seemed to say: *Here, I ask the questions, not you.* It was likely that people were afraid to enter a place presided over by someone so formally dressed. Outside, the rain had begun and was steadily intensifying. Having come in to escape the rain, Mr. G now found himself frightened within the very place he had sought refuge.

With the faintest hint of a smile, the librarian said, "I would truly like to help you—if you tell me the title of the book you are looking for." The man's voice was strikingly impressive; had he heard it outside, he might have found it reassuring. But here, in this strange atmosphere, it sounded less like comfort and more like authority. The air in the library was stifling; Mr. G grew nervous and began to sweat. Without meeting the librarian's eyes, wiping his forehead, he murmured, "It's a new book… I suppose it must have reached you…" "No library can rival the number of books we possess," the librarian replied, adding, "Just tell me the title, and we shall find it at once."

In a hesitant, subdued voice, Mr. G said the title: "My Mother, My Father, and Me." Then, thinking he might not have been heard, he repeated it: "My Mother, My Father, and Me."

The man quickly raised his head, looked him straight in the eyes, and smiled. Then, lowering his gaze back to the large ledger, he carefully turned a few pages and replied within seconds: "I see; however, this book does not appear in our records. It may have been published, but it has not yet reached us. Are you certain it has been published?"

He was sweating from unease and could barely register what the man was saying. What was he doing here? He needed to leave at once. Now he understood better why hardly anyone

came to this place. “I’m sorry,” Mr. G said quickly, “I suppose I’ll have to look for it another time. Thank you very much.” He turned abruptly and headed toward the exit with long strides. He was also afraid the librarian might ask why he was searching for his own book in the library. The man had declared, without properly looking anywhere, that the book was not here—and he had not even dared to ask why.

Suddenly, he remembered the Jedi Archives and holobooks from Star Wars, yet there was no trace of technology in this library.

Just as he neared the exit, he stopped abruptly, turned around, and began walking back toward the librarian’s desk. He could have asked for any published book, yet not a single title came to mind. It would have been far better to end his indecision and leave immediately. And yet, inexplicably, he did the opposite and moved again toward the desk. It was as if he were being drawn there. Wiping the sweat from his neck and temples, he prepared to ask for something else. He knew he was undergoing a strange experience—and he wanted it to continue. Perhaps he was once again inside that peculiar dream in which libraries were said to be gateways to infinity. Whatever it was, he wanted to pursue it.

In the distance, the librarian once more bent over the black-bound ledger, adjusting the arm of his glasses with his right hand. When Mr. G reached the desk, the librarian slowly raised his head and asked, “What else can I do for you?” No matter how brave he tried to be, the deep, resonant voice—perfectly attuned to the place—affected him profoundly.

His voice trembling, knowing how absurd it sounded, Mr. G asked, “Do you have my memories? I’ve always imagined they must be gathered and stored somewhere.” He could not bring himself to say that he sometimes imagined aliens collecting human memories and using them as a kind of fuel. He did not want to appear unhinged. He did not want the man to look at him as if he were mad. It would be far better to leave—but instead of easing, the rain outside had grown even heavier, and lightning flashes began to illuminate the dark library.

Suddenly, lines from one of his favorite poets, Edip Cansever, came to his mind:

“The wind abandons my memories,
Like garbage cast into the sea,
Like useless objects piled along the roadside,
It gives them back and quietly departs.”

To corner the librarian, he had asked for his memories—those like discarded debris in the sea—and now he waited for an answer. At that very moment, an unexpected smile appeared on the librarian’s face. Spreading his long arms wide, he spoke without hesitation:

“Of course we have them. We compile them. But I can only give you the ones you remember. Naturally, those concerning your mother and father are among them.”

Mr. G should have realized much earlier that he could not outplay the librarian. It was the last thing he had expected, yet the man was telling him that his memories were being compiled—

and that he could be given them. He would even hand over those concerning his mother and father. The way the librarian had said *"those concerning your mother and father"* carried such an insinuating tone that Mr. G began to feel as though the man knew everything about him.

Still, whatever the case, he tried to see the brighter side. In this place he had entered merely to escape the rain, he had first attempted to look for his book and, quite unexpectedly, had been given the chance to obtain his memories. What an extraordinary convenience. Moreover, he had learned that it was not possible to retrieve records of memories he could no longer recall.

"I imagine there are interesting things among the memories I can't remember," he said to the librarian. "You know, sometimes people try to erase their bad memories. The brain doesn't always work the way we want it to."
The librarian seemed to find this entirely natural. "You are quite right," he replied, "but why should we keep in our records what even you have forgotten?" Then, pointing upward with his index finger, he continued, "At first, everything was stored in the clouds. There is, as you know, a new technology—but later they realized how meaningless that was. Perhaps you remember those who said, 'What would it matter if we stored everything?' It clearly requires an immense amount of energy and cost. Of course, you live and we record—but even that has limits. It must have. Memories accumulated, grew—until they became as vast as the object passing in front of Tabby's Star. That is why we keep only what is remembered. After all, why should we preserve the memories you yourself deemed unimportant and forgot?"

He knew that star—Tabby's mysterious star, KIC 8462852. The librarian knew it too, but how did he know that designation, that seven-digit number? It was strange. For a moment, he found himself wondering whether there was some hidden relation among the numbers: 84, 85, 62, 52… what connection could there possibly be? Perhaps this thin, long, bespectacled librarian in his tailcoat even knew what that immense object was—the one that passed in front of the star and dimmed its light.

He must be dreaming. In this library where only remembered memories were preserved, the matter had now reached a mysterious star and the object crossing before it. How wonderful it would be if, in such an extraordinary place, his own book—*My Mother, My Father, and Me*—were also there.

Suddenly encouraged, as though he had discovered a crucial source, he leaned a little closer over the desk and said politely, "If even memories are preserved here, why shouldn't my book be? I thought everything was recorded."

There was a long silence. Lightning flashed again, and the library trembled with thunder. Mr. G found himself wondering whether the man had the power to stop time. In a place where even memories were stored, why was his book not there?

The librarian, with absolute composure, adjusted his glasses once more and spoke: "Your book is not here because you have not yet written it. You want to write it, but you cannot.

Your mind is quite confused. Neither the memories you cannot recall nor the book you have only thought about but not yet written exist here. How could we give you something that does not exist in our collection? Besides, are you truly certain you want to write this book? Yes, I said—you live, and we record—but we too have rules to follow. I'm sorry… I did not wish to say that you are full of fears and hesitations."

The man was extraordinary. The man was terrifying.

It was true—he was filled with fear and hesitation. Worse still, within that confusion, his fears were accumulating, turning into a sense of guilt. *What had the man said? Are you sure you want to write this book? Your mind is confused. You have not yet written it.* Like a guilty man, Mr. G lowered his gaze. In the darkness, he felt himself shrinking, crushed into a mere speck of dust. A title drifted through his mind: *Epsilon at the Edge of Infinity.*

As if to say there was nothing more he could do, the librarian spread his arms once again in a gesture that seemed to ask, *What else can I do for you?* Then, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, as though to prevent others from hearing, he added:

"I can see from our records that you were born in 1950. You grew up in a shantytown neighborhood later called Alemdar. Your father went to the Netherlands as an undocumented worker and stayed there for many years. You are very fond of toasted bread. The short novel you keep turning over in your mind mostly concerns the period from 1960 to 1980, though it does include certain details reaching into the present. You use writing as a refuge. Writing has, it seems, become your destiny. I would rather not go into further detail."

The man did not wish to go into further detail. It was just as well—had he done so, who knew what else he might have revealed…

Mr. G was completely shaken; in every sense, he was in disarray. This was truly a strange place. Mumbling awkwardly, "You are absolutely right… I should be the one apologizing," he thought it would be best for him to leave as quickly as possible. He needed to get away from this uncanny place at once.

As he hurried toward the exit, he heard the librarian call after him: "We will meet again. We'll be expecting you. Come to collect your memories."

When he stepped outside, he saw the same two elderly men and the young woman he had noticed before, still arguing at the entrance. The girl, clearly frightened, was trying to drive the old men away.

The rain had long since stopped.

On his way home, he began to think of a piece of music that would suit the library he had seen. If he wished, he could whistle the third movement of Piano Concerto No. 1 (Tchaikovsky) and then move on to the *allegro non troppo* section that begins with the winds. Yet, despite his deep admiration for Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, he could not quite match that music to the library.

Then Symphony No. 9 (Beethoven) came to his mind—the symphony that begins so softly it can barely be heard in silence, then swells suddenly with the surge of strings and winds, speaking of joy and brotherhood. But instead of the "joy" and "brotherhood" in its lyrics, perhaps it would be more fitting, in today's world where everyone seems to claw at one another's eyes, to have "fear" and "hostility."

During the process of composing the Ninth Symphony, Ludwig van Beethoven had gone deaf, and at the premiere, he could not even hear the audience applauding him wildly.

This library was a magnificent place—and it was, in every sense, the Ninth Symphony.

That night, lying in bed, he wondered whether all of it had been a dream or reality. Edgar Allan Poe had written that what we see—or appear to see—is merely a dream within a dream; Al-Ghazali had described death as a brother. According to Haruki Murakami, sometimes the only right thing to do was to dream. John Lennon, on the other hand, spoke of dreams and nightmares as being real.

What had the man said? *"Are you truly certain you want to write this book?"*

The next day, he recounted everything to a friend who had the habit of prefacing every topic with, "Life really is a dream, my brother." His friend replied, "What strange dreams you have. The black-tailcoated librarian who spoke of Tabby's star, huh…" and added, "Are you sure there really is such a library? I've never noticed that building. What you're describing is unbelievable—like a dream. Yet there must be some meaning to all of this. Those little things that never made sense to you before… it's as if your brain has been trying to give them meaning, and they've manifested."

He didn't fully understand what his friend meant—how had these things *manifested*… Thinking about manifestation, he looked into it and found something along the lines of, *"Consciousness emerges when a threshold is crossed in the integration of information. Consciousness manifests in this way."* He read it carefully. *"Yes… The place where information is integrated must, of course, be the library—consciousness manifests there,"* he told himself.

Mr. G explained to his friend that he wanted to forget everything that had happened, to close all the notebooks, but somehow he couldn't bring himself to do it.

"I understand you," his friend said. "None of us can easily forget, and as we replay the past in our minds again and again, we tear ourselves apart, get erased, and disappear. And we all keep trying to find meaning in what we've lived… but in vain."

Finding meaning… Yes, that was what he was doing—or at least wanted to do. He didn't tell his friend that in that library, only remembered memories were kept, and the unremembered ones were never given out. He also didn't mention that, because his friend might think him delusional, he had seen novels waiting to be written vanish into the darkness.

He knew he would have to go back another day, retrieve the memories he could recall, and shout at the man there: *"There are no memories without forgetting! Even fruit flies forget. Why won't you give me the memories I cannot recall?"*

Death is something we all want to forget.
We built an entire civilization to forget it.

Marty Rubin

Forget

Erase everything from your mind, struggle with nothing. Forget the southerly wind howling toward winter, the wild plums of spring, the silence of snow falling thickly in winter, the sunburnt faces of children in summer, the poems you read as you grew up that said, *"You are my fields and my darkness,"* the day a close neighbor adopted a child, Lenny in *Memento* burning his wife's things and saying, *"I can't remember to forget you"*—forget them all. Bury in some hidden place the great fire in the city market, the young man who drove a jeep into the sea during military service and, according to the locals, tried to cut the jeep's roof with a knife before dying, and his fiancée who cried for months; burn your mental notebook. There will be no relief from them.

Even knowing that the memories in your brain will writhe like restless worms in defiance of you, try to forget. Take the tiniest fragments of your past, stored in the darkest corners of your brain, tear them apart, grind them, crush them. Destroy them completely. But can all traces of forgotten memories truly be erased, or do some remain in the brain? You don't know. How could you? If the brain is designed to forget information, that works in your favor. Perhaps it was designed that way. Deep within your brain, is there a judge sorting through what comes before it? Constantly saying, *"Invalidate the forgetting process for these, but not for these"?* What will you do with that judge? Your brain will still read what it knows; no matter how much you shout *"Forget!"* it will still read what it knows.

Even if you knew that the chemical messenger dopamine in your brain plays a role both in forming and in forgetting memories, what good would it do—how would you use it to forget? You remember and forget simultaneously, endlessly. And never forget that your memories are tied to who you are. You surely realize that erasing them is erasing yourself, so don't play with fire.

Forget the woman in her nineties who, in her childhood performance in Thessaloniki, recited poems to angels, lost in the streets; forget that your mother and father developed Alzheimer's almost at the same time. Before your brain begins to forget, forget everything yourself. Accept that everything will be erased, buried in the darkness of that library whose existence is debatable.

Add to that list the cheap plastic shoes you wore all summer with patterns on them, into which catnip fell. Don't try to save any of it—erase it. Believe me, it will be much better for you. Even if the fight deep in your brain doesn't end, at least erase the images of your penniless childhood hidden in the greenery that occasionally resurfaces. Erase from your mind the words of the poet Edna St. Vincent Millay: *"Childhood is the kingdom where nobody dies."*

What if you remember the road, fine as powder, through that shantytown, and the village guard below, passed with the air of a victorious commander on his horse… The man has been dead for who knows how many years. Who would want to hear about the wrestling beetles you rescued from under round, natural caps in the soil and played with using spit-laden grass? All games have become digital now; who would touch soil and bugs… Forget the neighborhood fights divided by the tobacco and clover fields, and their connection to the endless fights within people. You know, knowing frightens people. Don't go home from the spring in the well beneath the tobacco field without washing your feet in the evening. Let the colored marbles and soda caps—especially the red soda caps valuable in the game—stay aside. Forget the grocer's little credit notebooks. Those who know, already know you left those notebooks in the stream where dirty water from the plate factory flows. Don't strain your brain with the smell of roasted peppers and eggplants in summer, or the smoke from crooked stove pipes in winter. Behave. No matter how much you resist time, for how long…

Forget the book you couldn't write, the one you didn't write. Keep the mastery to yourself. *"About fifteen years ago, while taking notes for the first draft of this book, I found myself wondering whether writing this book even had meaning,"* Tarkovsky wrote at the beginning of *Sculpting in Time.* So he had wrestled with this book for fifteen years. Even if initially one questions the meaning of writing the planned book, in the end, the book is written, and each book seems to gain its own significance.

Thoughts, memories, and dreams about a book had circulated in his own mind for quite some time too. Like Tarkovsky, he was aware that time was a bitter gift given to him. The right path for him was to forget all of this, erase it completely, without ever stirring up the fear or guilt within. And the most stubborn memories that reappeared as he erased had to be erased again and again, tirelessly. He constantly instructed himself on what to do.

Close all the notebooks, get out of this, meddle with nothing. Let another notebook open on its own. Forget the two young acquaintances hanged at dawn. The chill of fear in your heart, moving between cafés like a late, ordinary suspect. On the streets, anxious because this head does not fit in this neighborhood, mud on your way home. When you turn the corner of the cafés, on the left, look down at the clover and tobacco fields, soaked in the rain. As you approach home, let the oak tree at the edge of the tobacco field on the left smile at its wet self. Greet it and pass quickly, walking to the lines of Turgut Uyar: *"I had beautiful days wet with rain"* and ring your door a little further on.

When you left university and returned home from Ankara, erase from memory how you nervously passed between cafés with your long hair. Let your mother open the door; the house

is warm. Take off your parka and move it to the stove to dry. Let the smell of apple and orange peels on the stove fill your nose. *"You got very wet, you'll get sick,"* your mother says. Then she bends and opens the stove lid in front of the pan of börek. *"It will be ready soon, you can eat if you want,"* she soothes you. Do not forget that the neighbors next door were poor enough to eat pasta one day and potatoes another, and that the youngest son in that house hit sparrows on the head with a slingshot.

Do not involve the willows and poplars at the entrance of the neighborhood. Forget repeatedly the fresh walnuts that made your hands look dyed with henna. Don't let the smell of fresh walnuts circulate in your mind. Forget the yellow bus stop where you waited for the municipal bus on the intercity road in the mornings, carrying your bag; forget the small shanties hidden in the greenery among blackberries, nettles, and reeds.

Bury your toy green American jeep with the gasoline can on the back in the yard; the colored wooden blocks you used to write letters on; your shrunken pencil. Punch the door of the single-story white house, thinking, *"I will bury my memories in the yard,"* while the Syrian tenants inside stare at you in astonishment.

What business is it of yours with Cedric, who lives in America with his mother, whose father died when he was little? What do his neighborhood grocer and shoeshiner friends have to do with you? Perhaps these stories have scrambled your mind. Cedric's grandfather in England being a nobleman, eventually making him a little lord, and all that—this *Little Lord* story about the nobility of distant lands must have infected you; erase all this nonsense from your brain. What will you do with that tall, navy-suited, white-socked, civil-servant-looking man in his forties suddenly appearing in the neighborhood? What business is it of yours that, by some connection, he deceived your curly-haired sister-in-law's sister and brother-in-law, began coming to their house constantly, even stayed there? What good is it to you that this strange man, under the pretense of getting engaged and married, swindled the money the sister-in-law had been saving for years through her lacework? Forget even those who sneer, *"Fools, they let a man of unknown origin in to marry the girl, and he turned their money into a camel"…* forgetting them is not enough.

And why get so upset? You keep fixating on the same matter. Who loved whom in this world—are you the only one left out? What will you do with the stories of genies and fairies in the baths told during house visits lit by maritime lanterns? Don't step over polluted water without permission. The immigrants from Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia, and the population exchanges have long been forgotten. Now this city has new immigrants, new pains. Keep your thoughts from jumping here and there in your mind. If you find it too hard to erase them, dig a pit and shout into it like Midas. The earth you retreat into will keep your secrets far better than humans ever could.

A very, very long time has passed. You are now an old man; mourning a lost gold ring, endlessly reopening the same notebooks serves neither you nor anyone else. Syrian tenants now live in that single-story white house. Neither you understand them, nor do they understand you.

Time has thrown so many things away that you already speak with your grandchild in America half in English, half in Turkish. Who even understands whom in this world anymore…

Forget. Forget again. Always forget.

Look at the whitewashed walls of the house's front façade, crumbling in pieces like words narrating the cruelty of time. At the entrance of the neighborhood, did you not see the piles of trash in the front yard of the three-story house, once the only wealthy home in the area, which had shiny lights on every floor? Look at that abandoned, ruined house with broken windows and understand that even money cannot resist the passage of time along with the glittering past. Wealth and poverty alike turn into dust. Real life does not end like Hollywood movies; order always slips into disorder, chaos, and fragmentation. Disorder either remains unchanged or continuously increases.

Look at your face in the mirror and understand this too; take a breath.
Purge the tailor's needlework from your mind, let the threads unravel.
Where are the clothes that were once fitted in rehearsal…
The fluorescent lights in the shop—where are they?
Illegal workers…
Dutch cheese…

Turn off the fluorescent light in the shop without anyone noticing; stop listening to the sounds from afar, forget Holland. Sit quietly, behave. Accounting for grievances benefits no one; in the end, everyone loses here. Even if you count the years you lived—one, two, three, four—it would take a long time, understand this. A long time has passed. Up above, the block apartments along the intercity road are being torn down and rebuilt. The lower road has become even poorer, the upper road now looks down from a slightly greater distance. In the underpass, Syrian children on candle nights block the way with ropes. Close the door to longing for the past; lock it with the largest locks, nail it shut with massive planks.

Perhaps your parents did the best thing. Both of them developed Alzheimer's and completely forgot what they had done. Resist if you can… That night, when your mother said, *"Hurry, your father is going to stab me,"* how you ran, like a fool, to prevent the murder. While taking the not-so-distant route, your mind replayed your father's past deeds to your mother.

When your mother opened the door and let you into the linden-scented room where your father sat, the room was dim and warm; let alone a murder, not even a quarrel had taken place. The TV was on, but the volume was low. The small talk began. The atmosphere inside, leaving aside a murder to be committed with a knife, was soft like linden.

After a while, didn't your mother bring oranges with fruit knives on plates from the kitchen and offer them to both you and your father? The classic game of hospitality had begun. Something had to be wrong—how could it be that she offered a knife and an orange to the man she said would stab her? It was as if an unexpected symphony of forgetting was beginning to play in the strange silence of the room. The few old photos on the tired white walls seemed

to watch what was happening. The red-handled fruit knives on the white plates, the oranges shining in the dimness of the room, and the silence awaited what would happen next.

He remembered seeing something resembling a stork's beak wrapped in newspaper inside the old dresser and asking his mother, who said, *"Don't meddle with such things."* When he was little, he had found some pamphlets titled *Encyclopedia of Sexual Knowledge* in the small orange chest under the bed in the bedroom. Was his mother seeking a solution to the hidden shameful pamphlets in stork beaks too, one wonders…

The damp smell of the old house had seeped everywhere; it felt as if the house was slowly sinking into the ground. That night, he had stayed in the old house with his mother and father, listening to the sounds of woodworms before sleep. All night he saw that his father never slept, constantly moving around the house, turning lights on and off, while his mother slept comfortably as if she had never missed him.

They had forgotten…
The house was no longer run by them, but by Alzheimer's.
They had solved the problem; they had forgotten everything.

If he were to say, *"Mother, you called me because father would kill me…"* his mother would ask, *"Who?"* his father would stare blankly at everything, wandering the house until morning. In a place ruled by this cursed disease, neither communication, nor memories, nor past, nor future could be spoken of. All hope's lights had gone out. He should have understood that they had now forgotten everything they said and did. Silently, they seemed to be shouting: no more accounts to settle, no more arguments, no more tasks remain in this world.

But you didn't understand.
And not only that—you resisted forgetting…
That night, despite everything, you stayed there again. All night long, you took the white wooden horse from your childhood—the one you used to rock back and forth on, its mane torn off—and buried it in the corner of the yard, in the toy graveyard. Someone had stabbed a screwdriver into the horse's belly; wood shavings spilled out from its torso, and as you dragged it, the horse left a trail behind. Did you really have a toy like that? Or was it a smaller donkey, leaking wood shavings from its belly instead of a rocking horse? You had buried that deflated drum and small donkey under the mulberry tree before even building the small house in the yard. They were the first guests of the toy graveyard. Later, after the small house was built, weren't you the one who scared your younger brother by saying, "This house is built on the graveyard, there are spirits here," and chased the lizard you saw in that corner of the yard, claiming, "The spirit of that stupid donkey with a hole in its belly has passed into this lizard"?

Just in case your father would attack your mother, you stayed there that night. You wrestled with the toy graveyard all night. Perhaps even the spirit of the cats that lived in that house with you as a child—like Duman—was in the toy graveyard. Duman was the strangest cat he had ever seen. When you spoke to him, he would come and look into your eyes as if he understood.

That night, by staying there, you would protect your mother. That was the mistake you carried for your whole life. What your mother wanted from you was always unclear. Even if you had said, “Mother, look, my father has Alzheimer’s, he’s going to kill you,” wouldn’t she have said, “But he’s your father…”? Didn’t she always?

You knew your father had Alzheimer’s, but it never occurred to you that your mother might. No one attacked anyone that night. The next morning, your father stood by the window again, twisting the newspaper in his hands. They always argued, yet even with Alzheimer’s, they could never sever their bond; they could never forget each other.

And you? You were always the one left looking foolish.
You were the defiant fool.
The general fool responsible for everything…
The fool who thought money could solve all problems…
The fool torn apart, struggling to protect a mother who didn’t want protecting…

Yet their endless arguments, like their illnesses, were shared. They were happy with their quarrels and their diseases. They chose the easiest path: to forget. Not them, you had to wrestle with these troubles now. They fled from you by forgetting everything. Without paying any dues… As if saying, *“We have Alzheimer’s, as you can see we’re sick. You attend to your own problems now.”*

Did they really flee? They weren’t cowards; it wouldn’t even have occurred to their minds, like yours, that what they did was wrong. They were parents; they always had permission to make mistakes toward their children. They did as they wished, but their children could not be disrespectful to them.

Again, they scored the goal—not by running away, but by taking refuge in the disease, forgetting everything.

They forgot; now you too must forget.

Remember what Patti Smith said in *Dream of Life*: when the man she loved died, Alan Ginsberg told her, *“Release the spirits of those who have gone and continue to bless life.”*
If only you could release both your own spirit and the spirits of those who have left…

"It's very funny how the colors of the real world
only look truly real when you watch them on a screen."

Anthony Burgess

Cinema

His father took them to the cinema… A black-and-white film played at the summer İpek Cinema on a warm summer night, though the air was still cool. A sailing ship struggled against waves on the screen. Between the wooden chairs and the men and women sitting in front, he tried to see the screen. Pirates navigated the stormy sea. Unaware even of the real pirates of life, he was expanding the boundaries of his childhood world.

During the intermission, sodas were sold. The vendor tried to get attention by tapping the soda opener on the wooden soda crate. It was the late 1950s, and he was around six or seven years old. His father had taken him to the cinema, and for the first time, he watched, mesmerized, the imitation of life on the screen. He saw the sea and the pirates on the white screen, meeting them for the first time, making space for them in his memory.

Unaware of either the real-life pirates or the massive waves that the unimaginable sea of life could bring, he stared at the white screen, innocent. Swords were drawn, cannons fired. The dead, the survivors, those thrown into the sea…

His younger brother was still too small to understand the film and slept in his mother's lap in the summer cinema. He didn't remember the sounds well, but apparently, during the intermission, Zeki Müren's songs played in the cinema: *"I can't bear to smell, my beautiful magnolia."* Down the street, in the houses' gardens and in the hotel garden opposite the cinema, magnolia trees bloomed white and huge when in season.

Whenever he remembered these moments growing up, Eric Satie's *Gnossienne No.1* would always play in his mind. Among the very few positive memories he had of his father, this bright memory shone vividly. Beautiful memories resembled the chirping of cicadas on a summer day and sleeping peacefully; bad memories, like the foul-smelling water flowing from the tanneries, drowned wherever they spread in darkness.

The house is where our story begins.
Anonymous

The Single-Story White House

He was born in a mansion that was later converted into a maternity hospital. While his father was serving in the military, he stayed with his mother at his uncle's house, and later they moved into a rented home in Gece Mahallesi. When he was six, his grandmother passed away, and they moved to his grandfather's house in Şehreküstü. Around that time, a road leading to a newly built garage opened, and his grandfather's house was expropriated for the road. His grandfather passed away during those days. During his grandfather's illness, his aunts—who repeatedly insisted they did not want any inheritance—argued over the most absurd of things, like his father's chamber pot. Mr. G's father was left, as inheritance, with a boxwood back-scratcher and one-third of the compensation money the state paid for the demolished house.

With the inherited money, his father purchased a plot of land from a peach orchard that had been parceled and sold by one of his aunts' husbands. On the outskirts of Bursa, in what would become a new shantytown, they built a house and started living there. There were very few houses in the neighborhood; Mr. G grew up in this shantytown, formed from parceled-off peach orchards. He attended the last three years of elementary school, middle school, and high school in that neighborhood. Despite everything, he had a happy childhood there. One might think he would have learned in childhood that happiness had nothing to do with money—but he didn't, and he never learned. Perhaps it was his mistake, or the influence of his surroundings. Perhaps his child's mind led him to wrong conclusions: in a house without money or peace, his brain fabricated a false connection between missing money and unrest. Naively, he believed that if he obtained money, he could eliminate the unease.

Everywhere in the neighborhood, there were quince, mulberry, peach, and plum trees. After eating their fruits and playing ball, they washed their feet in the springs. The neighborhood lay between the village and the city. Later, more houses were built; the typical shantytown expanded. If one were to list the occupations of the residents: the most prominent was probably a retired noncommissioned officer. Tailors, municipal workers, and Merinos factory employees predominated. There was a bit of a social life at Merinos; a childless neighbor who worked there once took him to the factory cinema, where he watched Çolpan İlhan in the black-and-white film *Zümrüt*.

He had three siblings. He remembered fighting with his older brother, who passed away young after marriage. The older brother was six years his senior. His younger sister, born later, was much younger than him. Their house was a single-story, three-room dwelling. One of the rooms contained a bathroom, and there was a toilet outside, leaning against the house wall. Tomatoes and peppers were planted in the garden. The water pump in the yard later became a shared symbol in the memories of those who lived there.

Because the neighborhood and house were on flat land at Bursa's edge, the basement often flooded during winter in those years. They would open a hatch in the floor, retrieve the floating wet logs, and throw them into the stove. Today, whenever he hears TV programs mention "liquefaction" after earthquakes, he recalls those floating logs in the basement.

The women of the neighborhood would make tomato paste and tarhana together. Most of the residents maintained ties with their villages; supplies like tarhana, bulgur, and tomato paste always arrived from their hometowns, and they would visit those places during holidays. There was no concern over who bought a more luxurious living room set or a refrigerator. At most, they would place a watermelon in the small basin in front of the garden pump to cool it. On summer days, they waited for the ice cream seller to pass by, or they would buy two biscuits from the neighborhood store, sandwich a piece of Turkish delight between them, and eat it. They played with wire toy cars sold by the stove shops—or, if they didn't have enough money to buy them, they would make their own, attaching a large spool as a wheel to a long piece of wire.

Then how could the dead truly be dead,
when those left behind still carried them in their hearts?

Carson McCullers

Mother

It was a hot June day in the shantytown neighborhood established on the outskirts of the city in the 1960s through the parcelling of peach orchards. In its early days, the neighborhood had been a sparse collection of houses with wide gaps between them, but over the years, its proximity to the intercity road gradually incorporated it into the city limits, and it was no longer referred to by the name of the nearby village. The road sloping down from the main road toward the plain would turn into fine cream-colored dust in summer and thick mud in winter. Walnut and oak trees, celery fields, springs at the corners of the fields, and a small foul-smelling stream from nearby tanneries immediately caught your attention when walking around the area. Children would collect the fine cream-colored dust from the dirt streets and fill it into paper bags to make dust bombs for their games.

During his university years, he often imagined the characters of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*—a novel whose protagonist once said, "All we can do is walk around and tell the truth"—wandering through the streets of this shantytown in his mind. Even though the two deaf-mute men were technically characters from a faraway novel, for him they had become part of this neighborhood, wandering its streets like locals.

A dreamy young man wandered these shantytown streets, carrying the protagonists of distant novels with him, as if slicing the loneliness of far-off towns and pasting it onto the streets of the neighborhood. He was fully aware that he was destined to remain like a weed in this place.

His mother had warned him several times that living detached from the realities of the neighborhood could bring trouble. She would say it with words that described his body as on a mat and his heart in Egypt, and then they would laugh together.

Tailors, street vendors with handcarts, tea servers in cafés, itinerant sellers, construction workers, municipal laborers, and migrants from nearby villages all lived in this neighborhood. Two newly opened automotive factories, along with the woolen Merinos Factory—one of the Republic's major investments—had contributed to the neighborhood's growth, and over time it gradually spread further into the plain. Early in the morning, you could see sleepy young workers waiting for shuttles along the main road, headed to the car factories.

People gave nicknames in such neighborhoods. When he was a child, the residents called the wife of a municipal worker in charge of poisoning stray dogs "Mad Dog's Wife." In the early years of the neighborhood, a municipal employee had first built a house out of plywood, and later reinforced its walls at night from the inside. Over time, migration from the East made the lower part of the neighborhood start resembling Şırnak, and today it looked more like Syria.

In this shantytown, where every house was a shack, people nicknamed the wife of the latest municipal worker "Shantytown Ayşe Hanım," as if her modest home were a mansion. Oppressing others was a pastime everyone enjoyed; the residents feigned helpfulness but thrived on the scent of blood. The game of keeping the weak down persisted in its own way.

One stormy night during his childhood, before the house even had electricity, he and his sibling heard rustling noises from the bathroom, thinking a snake had entered. Their mother wanted to enter with a stove tong, but they refused, fearing the snake would bite her. Eventually, she grabbed a lantern and went outside, shouting for help from a neighbor. The man came with his wife but was too scared to enter, joking about shining the light into the snake's eyes. Finally, the neighbor woman scolded him and entered the bathroom with tongs. There was nothing inside. Later, they discovered outside, near the bathroom wall, a plum tree where the village watchman had tied his horse. The horse's tail scraped against the wall in the torrential rain, producing the rustling sound. That night, Mr. G didn't even think about where his father was.

It was a hot June day in this shantytown at the edge of the city. Years later, when Mr. G had grown into a full-grown man, his mother died in that very neighborhood. He ran to her, saw her covered with a white sheet, and began reciting prayers. J.D. Salinger's line, "All mothers are slightly crazy," came to mind. While the literal meaning did not quite fit, in terms of her love for his father, she was indeed a little crazy.

Her feet were swollen, her nails bitten; in bed, she seemed to shrink. To anyone looking at her standing, it was as if she were saying, "You will be like this too." Mr. G recited prayers, and it seemed to him that his mother was reading the Quran by the window of the single-story house, her white headscarf in place. His father had already passed away years earlier. He never told anyone offering condolences about the voices swirling in his mind.

It was a hot June day.
Mr. G's mother died.
Mr. G's mother died.
Mr. G's mother died.

It wasn't unexpected; she had, for a long time, erased everything in her memory. Death ended the great suffering on this hot, ordinary June day. People in the street were going somewhere, noting the activity in front of the house. Suddenly, Brahms' Third Symphony, third movement, began playing in his mind. He wanted to follow the strings and escape but couldn't.

When he grew up, Mr. G learned, as Aman Jassal phrased it, that love is "the sweetest dream and the worst nightmare." His mother's love for his father often turned into a nightmare, yet she never revealed her love outwardly, never said "I love your father very much," and always viewed her experiences as the sweetest dream. In her view, everyone took what fell into their spoon, and one never rebelled against fate.

In his dreams, his mother continually knitted with her needles without speaking, then set them down and wrote long letters at the table. Her pen was tiny, but the paper sheets were as large as bed linens. She wrote in an unknown script, then dragged the large sheets to the garden gate. When he asked, "Mother, what are you doing with these?" she initially gave no answer, later saying, "The birds will take them in the morning," and closed the gate. Everything in the dream garden melted away.

His mother was short, petite, but resilient. Losing her parents at a young age had given her the strength to withstand life's hardships. She was intelligent; even in old age, she memorized multi-digit bank and phone numbers. No one ever imagined she could develop Alzheimer's. At first, as she began forgetting things, her daughters-in-law thought she was joking. Yet she had forgotten everything except her husband. During her illness, she would occasionally ask where he was and then stare blankly out the window.

She had been hardworking, always helping her husband. Before washing machines or dishwashers existed, she improvised with wire cabinets in the kitchen and only encountered a refrigerator in the latter half of her life. Mr. G compared her to the mother of Little Lord Cedric. Though there was no drawing of Cedric's mother in the book, he was certain his mother resembled her.

She was from Thrace, had come to Bursa with her brothers during the evacuation in World War II, and had later lived with one of them after his marriage. She loved making börek on the stove, always saying, "I made börek, my child." Mr. G never asked her favorite dish, but he assumed it was Thracian manti with turkey meat and broth.

No matter how smart, she had her mistakes. Once, while making cherry jam, she accidentally added synthetic fertilizer instead of sugar after removing the pits from a few kilos of cherries, which she immediately discarded. The words of her husband, and her aunts' daughters, left a

mark on Mr. G. Life was merciless and unfair; her father never faced scolding for mistakes, while his mother did.

Neither overly exuberant nor overly quiet, she faced life's injustices like a silent river. She had truly loved only once. Calm and resigned, not dramatic, she handled her daughter's minor panic over taking aspirin with, "She'll sleep, she'll wake," without exaggeration. The 11th of the month was her guests' day; she cleaned, baked, dressed up, and waited.

Her simple principle: when her husband was distant, she stayed close to her son; when he was near, she stayed close to him. Her actions were always guided by him. Having lived her last years like a living dead, she passed away at 93, barely recognizing her son. This whitewashed, single-story house, where she died, had been their home for over half a century. A crucial page in personal and family history was closing, yet memories continued to unfold in his mind.

He remembered playing with his brother at night with a hazelnut mouse they could only see by holding a mirror under the wardrobe. They may have played with it for three or four nights before it vanished. They never considered that Duman, the family cat, might have eaten it. His mother had explained, "Duman must have eaten it." In her later years, Duman disappeared, never showing its body, for she considered the cat too noble to eat unboiled liver—but then, how had it eaten the tiny mouse? She said, "It won't show you everything; it ate the mouse quietly—you'd have kept a mouse in the house otherwise."

The family album, sitting in a cupboard in the back room where the floorboards had begun to rot, was filled with photographs that summarized the futility of everything. Mr. G remembered the photo-taking ceremonies at the end of weddings. Families who were not called to appear in the wedding photos would be furious and sulk at the family hosting the wedding, saying, "They didn't treat us like people." In those days, being invited to the photo session at the end of ceremonies like weddings or engagements was a mark of significance. Over time, technology, with mobile phones allowing photos to be taken every second, had rendered this ritual meaningless.

On the wall hung a small painting by a famous artist showing his mother reading the Quran while wearing her headscarf. How this small piece had arrived in the shantytown also had an explanation. While his parents were working in the Netherlands, the artist had traveled there to hold an exhibition. When his paintings did not sell at the show, he had fallen on hard times. Mr. G did not know exactly how they met, but the now-famous artist apparently stayed a few days as a guest in his mother's home in the Netherlands.

Strangely, words he had heard just the other day from a minibus driver—about the enormous number of people taking selfies at the site where a suicide bomber had detonated himself the day before—kept circling in Mr. G's mind. Somehow, death and amusement seemed to intermingle. He thought about how people waiting for the dead or gravely ill often laughed at nonsense in the middle of the night.

His mother was a woman born to work, to keep things in order, to produce. She was responsible for cooking, cleaning, laundry, ironing, child care—everything. Although both she and his father had only elementary schooling, her handwriting was far superior to his father's. Sometimes Mr. G wondered that if his mother had had access to good schools, she might have become a lawyer or a doctor. His father, on the other hand, would recount how, as an elementary school boy, he and the son of a local shopkeeper had frightened a teacher with a large knife and cleaver they brought to school. That would never have happened in the school he had attended. His father claimed the teacher couldn't even approach the back row where they sat. Perhaps he had not even finished elementary school. When his father returned permanently from the Netherlands, getting a driver's license had been difficult for him as well.

While her husband was in the Netherlands, his mother was both mother and father of the house. In late autumn, buying firewood, fixing problems around the house, enduring loneliness—these were all her responsibilities. She had a brother to whom she could turn for help when she grew tired. Her brother was a merchant tailor, and sensing the approach of industrialization, he had shifted from tailoring to selling ready-made garments. Business was not bad for him.

Occasionally, his mother blamed her brother for her marriage to a husband younger than herself, saying, "My brother burned me with this man." Hearing this, Mr. G would immediately imagine the scene when his grandfather, father, and aunts came to request her hand in marriage. She had "burned" with her husband, yet seemed to have done nothing to avoid the flames—perhaps she enjoyed them. On nights when his father stormed out of the house angrily, she would weep in the kitchen while washing dishes, and Mr. G, as a child, thought that if he earned a lot of money one day, he could rescue her from her hardships.

She had met her husband while he was an apprentice tailor under her brother, and knowingly married him despite the age difference. Her husband's family had initially come to arrange the marriage but later believed their son's life had been ruined by marrying an older girl unsuited to him. They forgot that they had come together to ask for her hand and, a few years later, began to wonder how to correct their mistake.

Her aunts intended to annul the marriage immediately to fix the mistake. They constantly boasted they would find a young, blonde bride and hold a wedding with drums, and somehow this reached her mother's ears. They thought they could correct their error by separating the siblings from their spouses, only to create another mistake, causing unhappiness for their children. No one seemed to consider these consequences.

His mother was extremely resilient, enduring all this for years without complaint, perhaps because she loved her husband so much. She was never a troublemaker but always sought to solve problems. His father, meanwhile, considered paying attention to certain women his duty. He disliked work, enjoying instead leisure, dressing well, and taking pleasure in life. For Mr. G's mother, life was not for enjoyment but for struggle and hardships. She was deeply religious, always striving to fulfill her religious duties.

The husband and wife occupied opposite extremes: one tasked with producing, the other with consuming. His father, unrestricted in sitting, walking, eating, drinking, and relations with women, was one extreme; his mother, disciplined, methodical, and hardworking, was the other. Mr. G had not fully understood this as a child, but later realized how deeply she loved his father. Whenever his father's actions troubled her, she would not hesitate to curse him mentally yet also forgive all his mistakes.

As there is a difference between what is written and what is done, there is also a difference between what is said and what is done. If you listened to what his mother said, you might think she considered her husband an arch-enemy. In reality, she was passionately in love with him, though she joked she would chop him into tomato-sized pieces.

Three years after his father's death in a private care facility for Alzheimer's patients, his mother died in the single-story white house, closing this chapter of their lives. This page had closed for his parents, but closing it for himself would not be easy. In his mind, alarms signaling that everything would go wrong kept ringing, and he could not silence them. Fear, anxiety, and gloom spread rapidly through him, unlocking every mental latch, speaking ceaselessly from within.

Reality, when replaced by silence, makes silence a lie.

Yevgeny Yevtushenko

Lie

You won't remember anyway, mother; you were sick and kept forgetting everything. At first, you stayed with me for a few months. Almost every night, around three or four o'clock, you would wake up, start stuffing things into plastic bags, and then try to force the door to leave the house. When we asked where you were going, you'd say things like, "I'm going to cook for your brother when he comes home from school," or, "I'm going to your father's." I know, mother, that you loved my brother more than me because he resembled my father! Your father, Müftü Bey, had died at the end of World War II. No matter how much I shouted, "Mother, it's almost been a century since your father died," my husband, with great patience, would suggest, "Let's call Müftü Bey," pick up the phone as if on cue, and say, "Hello, Müftü Bey, your daughter is waiting. Hurry a bit," soothing you with lies. Lies worked very well with Alzheimer's…

Knitting seemed to calm you somewhat. But the sweaters you made ended up comically small, and you didn't even notice this oddity. Before you became ill, you were so skilled at knitting and lacework that other women always looked to you as an example. One Sunday, when you ran out of yarn, you suddenly became idle and started grumbling. I couldn't fully understand what you were saying, but I knew it was a big problem for you. By chance, on that holiday, I

found a shop in the market that was open and bought you some yarn. That's how we overcame the yarn crisis.

During the time you stayed with me, unfortunately, you never recognized me as myself, mother. You thought I was your brother, your father—but never your son. Back then, I never thought about it, but now I do. You'd say, "I'll go home and cook for your brother," but never once mentioned me. Because you wrongly assumed I had come between you and your husband, you had already erased me from your memory. I try to recall my last moment before your illness when you recognized me as myself—but I cannot, I simply cannot remember.

Eventually, after persistent insistence, we took you from our home back to your own. A woman began taking care of you there. After my father died, I had come to visit you on a holiday. Once I sent the caregiver home for the holiday, you suddenly stood from your chair and hugged my neck. I knew you were too ill to truly recognize me, yet for a few seconds, I felt a deep joy, thinking that even if you didn't know me, you loved me. But the truth revealed itself in the most painful, devastating, and shattering way within seconds.

I was not myself.

You thought I was my father, mother…

I quickly summoned the caregiver and fled the single-story white house. On a holiday with hardly anyone around, I walked, crying, to a park near Alemdar. I was not myself. I sat in a tea garden there, continuing to cry, until a close friend I had called for help arrived.

You had hugged me tightly, thinking I was my father, and said, "How handsome you are." Perhaps you saw those you loved in someone present in the house, while the unloved never crossed your mind. You compared me to your brother, your father, your husband—in short, to those you loved—but you never saw me as myself. I know you never loved me as much as them, mother. If you were alive and I asked, "Your father or your children?" you would surely say, "My children." But that would be a lie, mother!

Sometimes you loved me, sometimes you didn't. This problem, which seems very complex, was actually quite simple. The more I shouted about what my father put you through, the less you loved me. On a popular TV series, someone said, "My mother loved my father so much that there was no room in her heart for her children." I don't know, but maybe you hated me. Though you appeared to agree with my repeated cries of, "Leave this man," "Haven't you had enough of this nonsense?" "Can this mother endure it?"—deep down, you were always angry with me. Even knowing that I loved you and tried to protect you, you never forgave me for constantly urging divorce. You looked at me as a traitor who would separate you from the man you loved.

Yet what business of mine was it to separate you…
Which child wants to separate their parents…
Why would I want to separate you…

But in every troubled period you experienced with my father, you always used me. And not only when you were ill, but even when your mind was clear, mother. Even when I was very small, I always fantasized, like a naive, foolish knight, about rescuing you from my father who caused you pain. You, however, spent your life crying over me, and whenever my father laughed at a broken face, you always followed him.

Six years ago, my father developed Alzheimer's, and shortly after, signs of the same disease began appearing in you. I am weary and bewildered in the face of death. I recite prayers for you over and over again. From behind the door of one room, thinking that your death would bring this house to an end, I cry out loud.

The old couches removed to the backyard, their smell of uric acid lingering, and the sofa thrown into the street beautifully illustrated how disease had turned the house into a ruin. The shoes placed in front of the street door circulated in my mind along with The Doors' *This Is the End, Beautiful Friend*. Feeling guilty for letting the song play in my head, I began reciting prayers again.

In the room facing the street where my mother died, the 11th of each month used to be her day. The day before, she would clean and prepare the house for her friends, usually arriving by municipal bus from the city to Alemdar, taking off their coats and scarves, saying, "How much this place has grown." Because cookies were baked, I loved my mother's day and would constantly ask her in advance, "Which day is your day?"

I would hear women whispering when my mother left the room, "Her husband is five or six years older, a big man, such luck Allah gives people…" I thought women enjoyed other women's pain, loved the scent of blood. They had no mercy for their own kind. Like most people, they were hypocrites. Smiling to their friend's face, eating the cookies and drinking the tea, they would whisper behind her back, "Allah give people ugly luck." Perhaps some of my father's friends or relatives admired his flirtations and provoked him. I would understand the connection between such an environment and the tensions at home much better when I grew older.

My mother had no fault in all that happened. She simply married someone who came to marry her. No one forced my father to marry her. Yet now, both the women around my mother and my father's friends and relatives acted as if they were judges, deciding the marriage was unsuitable and doing everything they could to undermine it.

Against my mother's "unconditional love," my father's endless "irresponsible flirts" affected not my mother or my siblings—but likely me—deeply. My mother loved her husband immensely, my siblings were small, so my father's affairs hardly concerned them. This had been, from my childhood, an unending obsession in my mind, a whirlpool consuming everything around it.

In the 2000s, before they became ill, both had already aged considerably, yet neither held back from telling my husband and my wife the lie, "We never spoke a harsh word to each other, not

even for a single day." If anyone else had heard those words, they might have believed, for years, the story of two elderly people who loved each other. Even in the years before their illnesses, when conflicts arose between them, my mother had once told me she would write my father's name under a man's coffin. It was similar to unmarried girls writing their names under a bride's shoes. On one hand, she was thinking of sending my father off from this world by writing his name under a coffin, and on the other, because she loved him so much, she kept stoking the cauldron in my mind.

One thing I know is that after half a century of countless fights, neither of them gave up on arguing nor on each other. Despite all those quarrels, when I asked my mother where she wanted to be buried, she would invariably say, "Next to my husband." Truly, their quarrels were absurd, and through it all, both of them did far more harm to others—especially me—than to themselves.

I don't know whether they were the ones being ridiculous, or if I was overly sensitive to their fights and separations. Even if I knew, nothing could have changed at that point. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, they had made me a part of—and a prisoner to—their lifelong, never-ending disputes. My head was throbbing, so I ran to the store and bought a few room sprays. But it was useless; the smell of uric acid and the memories that had permeated the house, burning my brain, not only didn't dissipate but seemed to stick to me even more.

"Don't worry," the neighbors said, "you did all you could." But it wasn't that simple. The same hypocrisy that exists in almost all of us was at play here too. Those six years with two Alzheimer's patients constantly reminded me of Nasreddin Hodja's story, *The Hodja, His Son, and the Donkey*. Because I had placed my father in a care home, the neighbors and relatives blamed me, saying, "Poor man, they tied him up there." Because I had someone look after my mother at home, they said, "He left his poor mother with this despot, this cruel woman." If the Hodja rode the donkey, it was his fault; if his son rode, it was shameful; if both rode, it was the donkey that suffered. It was a math problem without a solution, and no one looked back at the difficulties the Hodja faced.

Even when my children were grown and in high school, I was still dealing with my mother's and father's problems. Their problems never ended; they persist to this day in me. Time passed quickly, and when they grew very old, they stopped fighting—but neither separated, nor did they live in peace and comfort. My siblings were not as troubled by this. Perhaps the problem was me. I don't know how it happened, but because I was the oldest, I always observed, I always had to act. Every event was recorded in my mind.

Both my father and mother would openly say that they didn't really love me. The reason was that in our relationships, it felt as though they were children and I was the adult. They never liked my constant, "You're fighting again, stop it" lectures or my insistence on intervening. Let's call this a detail; over time, it fades, disappears, vanishes—but its residue always remains.

People live submerged in lies, saying they don't love those they love, or, like my mother, saying they don't love those they love deeply. When I was very young, I had learned from the family garden at the entrance of Alemdar that what was said and written was often a lie. As I grew older, I began to act much like J.D. Salinger: whenever I met someone I wasn't truly pleased to meet, I would always say, "I'm glad to have met you." I followed Salinger's advice: "If you want to survive in life, this is what you should say."

The Family Garden

At the entrance of the neighborhood, along İzmir Road, there were two municipal bus stops. The one in front of the Block Apartments, with its yellow-painted brick wall, was used to go to the city. Residents of Alemdar would leave their homes, walk about a hundred meters, reach İzmir Road, cross the street, and wait at the yellow-painted bus stop to head into the city. Across from this yellow-painted stop, there was only a pole, with a small sign indicating that it was a bus stop. Coming from the city by bus or minibus, you would get off at this stop, walk down toward the plain, and arrive at the neighborhood dotted with sparse houses.

The Family Garden was the place people turned into from the bus stop corner, surrounded by thick green plants, containing an old two-story wooden house. The owner of the Family Garden was a woman in her fifties, with henna-colored hair and gold earrings. You could sometimes see her on the street, talking with men who looked like gangsters, cigarette in hand. Her presence, so different from the women of the shantytown below, her relaxed stance at the garden gate while smoking, always drew the attention of neighbors returning home in the evening.

Despite its name, it was impossible to see the families who entered or left the Family Garden. Let alone entering or exiting, families stepping off the bus would pass the gate of the Family Garden with a somewhat cold glance. For children, it was a mysterious place where nothing of what went on inside could be known.

In the evenings, the Family Garden became even more mysterious. Red, yellow, and green bulbs glowed; songs by Müzeyyen Senar played softly; laughter from men and women could be heard inside. Although the interior wasn't very visible from the outside, there were probably tables where meals were served. Whatever the case, the newly established shantytown, once quite distant from the city, had perhaps disturbed the leisurely atmosphere of the Family Garden.

Mr. G's parents laughed at the suggestion of going to the garden one evening simply because they were a family, but without saying yes or no, they let the matter pass. The Family Garden remained in his mind for a long time as a question without an answer. As he grew up, he first learned from the Family Garden that there was often a huge difference between what was written and what was done. Not every family could enter every "family garden," and family gardens were not always suitable for families. Over time, he began to understand the widening gap between what was written in black-bound law books kept in libraries and what actually

happened in real life—and that politicians, said to represent the people, bore significant responsibility for this.

Then time played its familiar game on this garden as well, which appeared to invite everyone but actually only admitted adults. The woman who owned the Family Garden aged, and the house was eventually demolished because it lay right in the middle of the widened Bursa-İzmir road. The main road cut straight through the heart of the Family Garden. Below, a new shantytown had grown beneath the old railway, and everyone had long since forgotten the garden surrounded by thick greenery where Müzeyyen Senar's records once played.

Everyone thinks about changing the world,
but no one thinks about changing themselves.

Leo Tolstoy

The Bread Party

Later, behind the street that would come to be called Söğütlü Street because of the willows planted along the roadside, lived an elderly woman known to the neighborhood as Fatma Hanım of the Jaffa Oranges. In her youth, Jaffa Orange had lived in wealthy districts of Istanbul, but life had eventually driven her and her husband to this neighborhood. She would constantly mutter, "Ah, these Çakmak Hasans, Kibrit Memets…" looking down on the locals, and add, "Ah, these…" The women of the neighborhood didn't like her; they would concoct stories about her past and her honor, taking out their grudges against her in short order. Nobody at the time imagined how the resentment of Çakmak Hasan and Kibrit Memet at being looked down upon would manifest in the early 2000s or how their political preferences might shape politics.

In this neighborhood, piles of sand and bricks were everywhere, long before there was electricity, sewage, or running water. Children played among these sand heaps, turning bricks into trucks. Interestingly, Mr. G had grown accustomed to these construction site sights early in life, but later realized that neither the work nor the country had ever truly changed—it always seemed like a construction site. With the constant migration from east to west, from villages to cities, and from all cities to Istanbul, the country perpetually took on the appearance of a construction paradise.

Part of the games children played among the sand and bricks involved warning the construction workers about demolishers sent by the municipality. These demolishers would come and tear down parts of the makeshift houses, but as soon as they left, construction accelerated. The workers themselves would flee from the demolishers, who confiscated tools like shovels, picks, and hammers. When demolishers came to the neighborhood, residents

resisted as much as they could; men shouted, women wept. In one demolition, a neighbor woman had remained under her destroyed roof with her small baby, and the demolishers could not remove her from her home.

The most famous person in Alemdar was the wrestler Dinarlı Mehmet. Fatma Hanım would comment when he went to work: “Look, the most famous person in Alemdar is going to work. You come all the way from Deliorman to Afyon Dinar, earn the title ‘World Wrestler’ with your matches, be known as Dinarlı Mehmet in Bursa, and then settle here among Çakmak Hasans and Kibrit Memets in Alemdar.” Wearing a cream-colored Panama hat, carrying a briefcase, and with a shaved head, Dinarlı Mehmet would slowly walk to work. He seemed like a giant three times taller than anyone else on the street. On sunny days, his shadow stretched so long ahead of him that children tried to measure its steps, arguing over how many there were after he passed.

That day, Mr. G paid no attention when a child on the street said he had seen a fairy bathing at night in the hot water tap. He had a more pressing concern: a police officer living a few houses below and his tall teacher wife were separating. A few days prior, the teacher had left her three sons at home and gone to her mother’s house. A few families from the neighborhood had piled into a truck the previous night to convince her not to leave, but they returned empty-handed. The teacher didn’t even open the door, simply gesturing through her mother’s window, “It’s over.”

He realized how far the tension in the neighboring house could go, which made him uneasy. At home, friends’ mothers were no longer there to care for them; their grandmothers would. That morning, while talking with friends whose mothers had left, they discussed why the owner of the Family Garden spoke so comfortably with men at the gate of her boxwood garden, and how many steps Dinarlı’s shadow measured. The older child among the ones whose mothers had left didn’t join in; his face was still fallen from the news the night before. To cheer him, they told him there were red fish in the small pool inside the Family Garden. He didn’t care; clearly, he was thinking about his mother and the problems he might face in the future.

Families in Alemdar not only dealt with domestic problems but also faced a common threat: their illegal homes could be demolished. Toward the end of 1959, a former unionist who had worked at Merinos, now a Bursa deputy from the ruling Democrat Party, suggested to the residents that if they didn’t want their homes demolished, they should join the Vatan Cephesi, a branch of the party. The entire neighborhood embraced this as an opportunity, saying, “Space in the world, faith in the afterlife.” Homes were everything to them. Even without a political preference for the Democrat Party, they wanted to seize this chance. In every discussion, people began with, “Space in the world, faith in the afterlife,” never mentioning the Democrat Party, and concluded by emphasizing what a great opportunity this was for them. Among the frequently heard sayings was, “The captain saves his own ship.” Most of the men would shout, “Let’s not miss this opportunity, or the fish we lost will be too big!”

The neighborhood had made its decision. One day, they gathered in a house to carry it out. Much tea and cigarette smoke filled the room as they argued loudly. From the window, his father called him, and when the window opened, thick smoke poured into the street like a fire. They sent him to buy large amounts of letter paper from the grocer. At one point, his father also told him to bring ten or fifteen pins. The striped letter papers were joined together with pins, and the entire neighborhood signed the papers to join the Vatan Cephesi. Thus, Alemdar's first political meeting took place.

In reality, the residents had no real interest in politics—they only wanted to save their homes, while politics sought to use them. All they cared about was that their homes wouldn't be demolished; the rest didn't concern them. Perhaps their only "fault" was how easily they allowed politicians to use them. The names of those who signed the long pinned sheets were later read on the radio in the "List of Vatan Cephesi Members," which was talked about in the neighborhood for days. Between the words, "Space in the world, faith in the afterlife," everyone had joined the Vatan Cephesi and saved their homes. Only Fatma Hanım of the Jaffa Oranges remained pessimistic: "They tricked these fools; they'll demolish the houses again. They just put a finger of honey in our mouths." Yet May 27, 1960, was only five or six months away. By then, electricity had reached the shantytown, and radios could be heard from homes. On the morning of May 27, "Attention, attention, the army has taken over!" suddenly echoed, and everyone realized something had changed—but at the same time, they worried whether the signatures they had previously given would bring trouble.

Later, trials that began on Yassıada led residents in cafés to whisper, "They're going to find those who signed and throw us in prison now." According to another rumor imagined by someone with a vivid imagination, those who joined the Vatan Cephesi would be locked in a prison on another island where stray dogs were sent. When this reached the women, they discussed this grim possibility while drinking tea and knitting. For a while, the neighborhood debated in hushed tones whether their political decision would now cause them trouble. Some said, "Nothing will happen," while others feared, "They'll put us inside too." Some blamed those who had gone to speak with the now-arrested unionist deputy. The men who had been praised five or six months earlier with, "Without you, our homes wouldn't have been saved," were now considered guilty. Was this what it meant to be Çakmak Hasan or Kibrit Memet? But how could they have known everything would change so quickly? Intuitively, they found a way to cope with this rapid change by simply saying, "We are from the Bread Party," and that settled it.

Over time, the neighborhood began to forget that signing the pinned striped papers could harm them. "But it couldn't have worked any other way…" they said, blaming the old administration. Small adjustments in attitude were observed among the residents. The era had changed, and everyone slowly began adapting to the conditions of the new day. A different wind blew in the cafés; praises for Cemal Paşa were sung; people kept rhythm to the march,

“Could this happen, could this happen, brother hits brother.” For them, “the incoming agha and the outgoing pasha” became the norm.

Soon, as marches played on the radio, the neighborhood began to discuss how appropriate the army’s actions had been. Everyone then went to give their wedding rings to the state’s emptied treasury. Amid cries of “We stand with the weak,” they apparently sided immediately with the strong, according to the standards of their time. Çakmak Hasans and Kibrit Memets were not as quiet and meek as Fatma Hanım claimed. Most of them claimed to be from the Bread Party and were accustomed to making do. Had they read somewhere that survival depended on adapting to circumstances? They hadn’t read or written much—they had merely learned by observing life that those who adapt survive.

The city was changing rapidly. By now, Alemdar was no longer inhabited only by workers from Merinos; in the early mornings, a sleepy, crowded group of workers would gather at the İzmir Road bus stop, waiting for the shuttles that would take them to the Organized Industrial Zone. Though delayed, the process of industrialization had arrived, extending from the old, retired city into Alemdar, the new shantytown neighborhood.

There is no 'us' and 'them'; it’s an illusion.
We are all human beings and we all have
a responsibility to support
one another and to discover ways of
wresting power from the very few people
who control all the money and all the property.

Roger Waters

They and us… They had two friends who were a bit better off and lived on the upper side of the street. Mr. G remembered a letter that one of them sent him years later about the neighborhood and its surroundings:

“There must be other cities where social classes are separated as sharply as in Bursa, but the most typical example I know is the part of Bursa where we lived. I think this is a feature unique to Bursa. The part of the city where we lived was divided into three classes by two major asphalt roads. The upper part of Kükürtlü Street was a place where the upper-middle class lived. Among them, there were even some industrialists slowly coming into prominence. In the lower part of this street lived the lower-middle class, and below Mudanya Street lived the working class. The difference between those living in the upper part of Kükürtlü Street and those below was not as sharp as the difference between the top and bottom of Mudanya Street. But the difference between the lower and upper parts was very sharp.”

Another friend of Mr. G, who later became a sociology professor, added the following lines when they met:

"What can I say about the top and bottom of the street? For one, the place we called the 'lower neighborhood' (how strange, even its name coincides with a Steinbeck novel) was a place where we played football several times and lost every time. Moreover, I think at least once, perhaps more, we got beaten or experienced similar things! I think it was already impossible for us not to get beaten. Back then, we could not really name such things, or, speaking for myself, I could not think about them as I do today. 'They' were different from 'us,' and whatever that difference was, we did not know. One way this difference expressed itself was that in our football games we always lost and got beaten! Today, I can say a lot about the lived experience of class difference, both because of my age, being an educated, learned person, and as a social scientist."

They and us…

This divide between the bottom and top of the street was clearly visible. Below the street were shanties; above, block apartments. Even if both sides waited at the same bus stop to go to the city, one could immediately tell where someone came from by looking at their clothing. The sociologist friend continued:

"Of course, the first thing that comes to mind is this: the real beating was theirs because, when they saw us, when they dealt with us in any way, the first thing they did was return the beating they had received. And they actually never received that beating—they were simply born on the lower side of the street. Experiencing a beating without ever having been beaten is hard to endure… I cannot say what this feeling is like because I was not born there; I can only grasp it through reasoning. Secondly, I can say what I felt… Whenever I went to the lower neighborhood for anything, I felt a strange alienation, slight fear, and an indescribable feeling… It was the sense that I was in a completely different space, that this place did not belong to me or my kind. A wild place, a sense of danger… (Maybe partly fear of being beaten, but I don't think that was all.) A place without proper houses or apartments: muddy streets, disorder, etc. I think this was the way I experienced the difference."

There was a difference between my sociologist friend's view of poverty and Sartre's. According to Sartre, poor people did not know that their role was to allow his generosity to function. Unlike my friend, Sartre did not fear the poor and, in the life story he wrote, gave them a smile showing equality:

"I was giving them a smile as a gift. I thought they looked bad, and I did not want to touch them, but I forced myself; it was a test, and they had to love me: this love would color their lives."

As his friend said, he was "on the side that had experienced the beating without ever being beaten," on the lower side of the street. Mr. G did not fully belong to either "them" or "us" described by his friend. None of the parts of the street, divided by different people, suited him.

Most likely, some of his troubles stemmed from this. Amid all the chaos, he was like a resentful wanderer trying to find his way. While the Arabesque neighborhood, fed by migration, flourished around coffeehouses with songs like "Sevemedim karagözlüm seni doyunca" spreading, he opened his ears to all the sounds, trying also to hear the distant ones. On days when unrest blew at home, two mute characters from distant novels wandered through his mind alongside the coffeehouses singing, "Sevemedim karagözlüm seni doyunca."

Years later, when he wrote one of his first books, *Florentine Carlo*, Mr. G was introduced to an American professor teaching at a university in Turkey. When the American learned that Mr. G's family originated from the Yörüks who migrated from Konya Karaman to Rumelia during the Ottoman period, then settled in Bursa via population exchange from Thessaloniki, and that his father later went to the Netherlands as an undocumented worker, he was astonished by the scale of migration and said to him, "Forget Florentine Carlo; why don't you write your own life story?"

And if I try to answer you now by writing,
it will still be nowhere near complete,
because even in writing, this fear and its consequences
separate me from you and because the magnitude
of the material far exceeds my memory and my understanding.

Franz Kafka

All women become like their mothers.
That is their tragedy. No man does, and that is his.

Oscar Wilde

Father

A white-collared shirt, a tie, long coats in winter, lemon cologne, suits, a close shave, shouting loudly, and fighting—these were the first things that came to his mind when he thought of his father. His mother constantly starched the collars and cuffs of his father's white shirts to make them stiff and to ensure he looked handsome. In the folds of Mr. G's mind wandered a tall, handsome, dark-skinned man—his father—sometimes with hair slicked with Brylcreem in certain photographs. Years later, his mother-in-law's bridge friends would tell him, "He's like an American movie star, really!"

His father was a tailor, and he remembered him sewing, smoking, fitting coats on women, eating with gusto, and shaving. His father's favorite dish was a vinegar porridge. This dish was made by mixing vinegar into a flour-based porridge and adding pre-cooked round meatballs.

It was as if in his mind there was a section labeled “My Father’s Memories,” and there was a man sitting there. This man, whose identity he did not know, was erasing some parts of his memory and polishing others. In any case, most of these memories caused anxious thoughts mixed with fear to wander through his mind, though very few of them made him smile.

However, his father, who loved dressing well and living life, unfortunately did not enjoy working as much as he enjoyed traveling, playing billiards, or backgammon. For example, he would often fail to finish the coats that his aunts needed for the holidays, never missing a chance to cause trouble within the family. At that time, drinking tea in the park with his mother and father—where, in her eyes, a very stylish lady and her husband were present—or going to sit with two sisters in a building where women textile workers lived, all became issues for his mother, and the tension in the family never ended.

When his father was home, like any child, he couldn’t play noisy games with his siblings. His father could get angry and shout. He didn’t even know whether he loved or hated his father. He was always confused about this. He thought his father was always a source of problems. As he grew older, he saw that his mother did not love him either, and as he grew even more, he realized that despite all the fights and noise, they would never separate, which only added to his confusion. Oğuz Atay wrote in a letter to his father, “Despite all your apparent differences, I think only my mother knew your language.” Surely, only his mother knew the language of Mr. G’s father as well, for despite all the fights and problems, they never separated.

His father was like stormy weather—like a storm where lightning strikes and black clouds rage. He spoke loudly and shouted at his mother. He always had the priority; his mother constantly stood ready to fulfill his wishes. With his starched shirts, pressed trousers, and Gelincik cigarettes, he was someone admired by other women, fun for others, but a source of fear for them.

He could overturn the dining table for a ridiculous reason, slam the door, and leave. Even if he never physically harmed his mother or them, he was a problem whose outbursts were unpredictable. When his father started shouting, a huge crystal chandelier he had once seen at a wedding in the old municipal building would fall noisily in his mind, scattering shards of glass everywhere.

When he was in middle school, his father would start reading his history book at 11 p.m., and he would go to bed very late. The next morning, his excuse for being late to work would have been prepared at 11 p.m., and the history reading session could last until 3 a.m. Naturally, after his mother repeatedly said, “Get up, it’s very late,” he would only go to work by noon. “Daylight harms the sun, the night harms the candle,” his mother would say while making his bed after his father went to the tailor shop. Even while it was debated whether he had finished priMeryem school, his father’s constant claims of knowing everything and his repeated shouts of “I know, son!” were truly baffling.

His father was surreal.

He recounted the events like this:
"I don't remember ever playing games with my father. It wasn't common for my mother or father to show affection by hugging us either. Hugging and touching weren't for them. Only my uncle's wife, my aunt, loved us as children, hugged us, tickled us. I remember going to a summer cinema and later the holidays. Holidays were the busiest and tensest periods for tailors. They worked in the shop until dawn. There were always issues in my father's relationship with my mother. Until I got married or even after, I was always on my mother's side. I protected her, defended her, was on her side—but later, looking back, I realized that my mother wasn't really on my side; she was on my father's. I must have been foolish, believing all her curses and tears when my father wasn't around.

Outwardly, my mother seemed to hate my father, but in reality, she was utterly devoted to him. When my father came home late, his mind always elsewhere, and treated her poorly, the moment he showed her a little attention, she would act as if he had no flaws. This was a nuance too subtle for children to grasp. Truly loving someone you say you don't love was outright hypocrisy. I realized this much later, and it became an even bigger disappointment for me.

So, you try, you struggle, in vain! Their efforts were pointless—they seemed to fit together like a lid and pot, making peace with each other through their fights. I always felt like I was singing from the outside. No, that's not how it was; I don't think any child would try to separate their parents. That's out of the question.

Of course, my father was always a problem. He later turned the tailor shop into a store selling yogurt and cheese. Supposedly, he was going to run it jointly with his sister's son, but it didn't work, and the business failed. Afterward, he moved the tailor shop to our shantytown neighborhood for a while, and then had to go to the Netherlands as an illegal worker with a friend."

What did it mean when Mr. G repeatedly said he didn't want to separate his mother and father? By saying this constantly, was he unconsciously revealing that he actually wanted the opposite? Perhaps he wasn't as innocent in these matters as he seemed; maybe in reality, he was even angrier at his father than he admitted. There had to be some meaning behind his constant insistence on not wanting to separate his parents. Moreover, Mr. G loved Sezen Aksu's song "Masum Değiliz Hiçbirimiz" ("None of Us Are Innocent") very much.

No tailor can stitch together
what language cuts apart.

Ayla Aydemir

The Shop

Tailors worked with velvet fabrics, pincushions with starch, various thimbles, chalks used for marking the fabric, measuring tapes for taking both the fabric's dimensions and the customer's

measurements, and a kind of sprayer used to determine skirt lengths. They would take the fabric, hold it against the customer, and try to anticipate how the garment would look, aiming to impress the client. Light and color were important to them. The smell of fabric was a scent associated with dressing well, looking good, and enjoying life. Tailoring was more than just dressing to cover oneself or stay warm. Tailors worked to fit every hunched back with a kaftan, striving to make people look beautiful and fashionable. For a fee, they would make something that suited you, updating and transforming your image long before the profession of image makers even existed.

Moreover, the city they were in held a very special place in textile history. In the 16th and 17th centuries, fabrics with gold and silver threads were produced here, and the materials for the finest clothes worn in Europe were woven in this city. His father, in his youth, had been a very talented but lazy tailor. Instead of sitting in the shop and painstakingly sewing with a needle, he preferred wandering with his wealthy friends, eating, and chatting.

By then, the tailor shop no longer existed, nor were there women coming for fittings, apprentices working late into the night with fluorescent lights hemming coat skirts, or journeymen and seamstresses. In its place, a bank had opened on the corner. Nevertheless, for Mr. G, even when his father was in his eighties struggling with Alzheimer's, the faint smell of fabric hidden on that street corner had always lingered.

Mr. G had always known his father as someone who disliked working. That notion changed, however, in his father's later years when he bought a small plot of land in a village and built a little house. Despite his age, he worked from morning till evening under the sun, growing black figs, tomatoes, peppers, and olives. Mr. G observed how much his father loved cultivating the land. He wondered: if his father had been a farmer instead of a tailor in his youth, would he have been more diligent and successful in a profession he loved? He could not know—perhaps he would not have wanted to be a farmer. Regardless, as he watched his father tending fig trees and tomatoes in the final years of his life, Mr. G began to think that maybe his father was not lazy at all, perhaps he had just chosen the wrong profession.

By the late 1950s, the era of drinking tea with raisins during World War II and rationing bread had passed. In Bursa's priMeryem schools, powdered milk, butter, and cheese distributed under the Marshall Plan were now handed out during lunch breaks. Presumably, this would help children stand more resilient against the "reds" in the north.

Alongside the models in his father's tailor shop, two large books showcasing America were displayed on a stand. These books had likely been distributed to shopkeepers as part of the Marshall Plan. They depicted modern American cities and presidents through photographs. Evidently, the winds of the Cold War had reached Bursa as well. Even without a record player, they had at home a 33 RPM plastic disc with Celal İnce singing "Dostluk Şarkısı" ("Song of Friendship").

They had lived through these times without understanding the consequences of such developments. The crisis caused by the U.S. placing nuclear missiles in Turkey and Italy and the USSR in Cuba, which could have led to nuclear explosions above their heads, would only be understood by most, including Mr. G, many years later. His parents, focused on their constant quarrels, had paid little attention to the nuclear clashes of great powers.

As a child, he had gone to Izmir for his uncle's daughter's wedding, where he saw soldiers returning from the Korean War disembark from a massive American ship and be reunited with their families after a long time. Some soldiers were disabled; he remembered vividly the embraces and the tears. While they were in Izmir, due to a one- or two-week delay in the wedding, his father had had the first argument Mr. G could remember, sending telegrams demanding they return immediately to Bursa. He did not recall whether his mother had replied to that telegram, being too young to remember. Later, his uncle brought him a toy jeep—a gift that every child would chase after, complete with a gas tank at the back.

In fact, three months before Mr. G was born, in May 1950, Turkey had experienced a major political shift. The 27-year rule of the Republican People's Party (CHP) ended, and the Democrat Party came to power, marking a new era in every aspect of life in Turkey. In Bursa, the Democrat Party won all 11 parliamentary seats, achieving a remarkable success. In short, Mr. G was born during a period when liberalization and anti-state economic policies began to be implemented.

During those years, people had started caring more about fashion. For men, long coats, double-breasted jackets, trousers with wide cuffs, and felt hats were in style. Although none of the women he knew wore hats, he remembered the winter coat with a fur collar of a lady, wife of a Democrat Party industrialist, as a symbol of wealth. Rich men also adorned their coats with astrakhan furs on collars and cuffs.

Words like *teyel*, *sürfile*, *kret*, *drape*, which he didn't always understand, flew around the women tailors of the 1960s. By now, few people probably knew their meaning. Inside the shop, journeymen and apprentices worked, while outside there were seats and tables displaying coat models, along with colorful foreign fashion magazines. For him, the scent of fabric and the fluorescent lighting—unavailable at home—were part of the shop's distinctive character.

At the back, there was another large mirrored room where fittings were done, with apprentices and journeymen working. His father marked coat hems with chalk and pins, trying to fit the sleeves properly. The street where the shop was located was prominent at the time, and from what he could tell, his father's customers were people who liked to dress well and could afford it. His father was known as a handsome, charming man, and because ready-to-wear coats were not yet produced in the country, his work attracted attention. Besides being good-looking, his father was also a skilled tailor.

The corner next to the shop housed the old Turing Hotel, a wooden building where women working at a nearby pavilion stayed. Once operated by a French woman named Madame

Brotte during the Ottoman period and formerly called Hotel d'Anatolie, Sultan Mehmed Reşat had even stayed there in 1909. Later, the hotel fell into neglect and ruin, becoming a lodging for pavilion women. Sometimes, women staying at that hotel would come to his father's shop inappropriately dressed for fittings.

I fell in love with him when we were together,
and during the years we were apart, I fell even more deeply.

Nicholas Sparks

Separation

Since childhood, he had always been aware of the discord between his mother and father. That tension became fully visible when he was in middle school, and one day his parents suddenly separated. In truth, it was not entirely unexpected. He didn't clearly remember why they separated—perhaps there were countless reasons. Things had never gone well between his mother and father. It was common knowledge that his father was not exactly well-behaved when it came to women.

His father was always after pleasure: dressing well, enjoying good meals, chatting and laughing with women. Relatives would often call him a "salon man." Questions like who earned the money, who cooked, and who washed the clothes were left unanswered. If he hadn't had children and had been a tailor with no money, being a "salon man" might not have seemed so absurd—but in their circumstances, his father's role as a salon man was utterly ridiculous. His mother knew everything he did but rarely protested—or perhaps couldn't. It was plainly unfair. His mother was usually responsible for everything, while his father bore responsibility for nothing.

No matter how much she loved him, his father did not love them. When angry, he would slam doors and roam the house in a constant state of irritation, as if ready to abandon them at any moment. Rather than providing security, he spread insecurity. Eventually, what had to happen happened: instead of leaving the house himself, his father sent them away with only a few belongings. They were left stranded. Their uncle was the only one left to look after them. Being abandoned, left alone, and realizing that the person you trust and call father did not care about you, even tried to push you away—this was an unbearable feeling. The word "pain" seemed too ordinary to describe it. What he referred to was something far more persistent, sticky, and indescribably awful than pain itself.

They were leaving…

A horse-drawn carriage arrived at the door of the small, single-story white house. They loaded some belongings into the carriage and set off to move into a single room in a house in Gece Mahallesi, where they had previously rented, to start living there. His sister was six, he was

twelve or thirteen. Their uncle provided money for their livelihood, and their mother tried to earn a few pennies at home by embroidering towel edges.

Those were hard days…

He had once overheard his mother telling someone that his father yelled at landlords: “How dare you rent to my wife and children?” When he heard those words, he was very upset and asked his mother, “Does Dad want us to be homeless?” She remained silent. Though she had thrown them out of the house, she did not speak ill of his father. That night, in a dream, he saw his mother kissing his father. He did not speak to her all day. Confusing dream with reality, he shouted at his mother, “Why are you kissing him?” She misunderstood, thinking he was jealous of his brother. “You are my children; I would kiss both of you,” she explained.

Alongside leaving home and financial difficulties, the school craft assignment had become a complete nightmare for them. The task required starting with a wire skeleton of a horse, then covering it with wet, glued newspaper to create a horse figure. Together with his mother, he struggled in a blue plastic basin with the wet newspaper, but the papers kept falling apart. The wire skeleton was not well made to begin with. The newspaper strips, perhaps insufficiently glued, kept coming off, and the parts meant to represent the horse’s muscles fell piece by piece.

The horse assignment was truly a nightmare. The scattered newspaper in the blue plastic basin reminded him that some things in life were shattered. Even years later, when he saw a horse, Mr. G would still recall those wet newspaper pieces in the blue basin. The difficult conditions, the scattered newspaper horse in the basin, had etched themselves into his memory almost permanently.

The future was uncertain for them. Even as a small child, he felt that uncertainty to his core. Gece Mahallesi was a dark neighborhood where houses on both sides of the street were very close, and stove smoke from one house would mingle with the next. It was winter; the future was unclear, and hope was scarce. He asked his mother, “Why don’t everyone’s parents separate?” If his father had been there, he might have made the horse figure. “Don’t you know how incompetent your father is?” his mother said. “Even if he could, he wouldn’t bother.”

One winter passed this way. Then, unexpectedly, as always, his parents reconciled. They returned home. The house was empty, filled with dust and cobwebs, and the kitchen sink was piled with unwashed dishes. His father had sold some of the household items to his sister’s daughter. The house was so empty that at first, it seemed suitable for playing football. In reality, it was not a large house, but in his eyes, the emptiness felt immense. Worse, Mr. G perceived that emptiness as frightening, as if fairies or spirits roamed within. Things were packed and sold; adults left and then reconciled, but all these events left deep, indelible traces in his memory, constantly triggering gloom and anxiety.

As he grew, he believed his sense of abandonment was somehow connected to the city itself. Bursa, the first capital of the Ottoman Empire, had been abandoned; Edirne and Istanbul had

replaced it. Power and wealth had deserted Bursa. The fairy-tale sultan city described by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, after being abandoned, had grown old, white-haired, and waited in the darkness of night, holding a lamp for the funeral processions of princes. Bursa and Mr. G shared a similar fate.

Against Istanbul, he always sensed a feeling of defeat and abandonment lurking somewhere in the city. Yet, this feeling was not hidden—it was blatant, openly experienced. People who loudly boasted everywhere about going to Istanbul, what they had done there, what they bought—these were, in Mr. G's eyes, traitors to their city. Furthermore, such people shamelessly compared the dullness and insufficiency of their city while betraying those they loved, resembling the very kind of hypocrites he despised. Years later, a friend lightly teased him: "Seeing the city you live in as a betrayed woman is just the sort of thing you'd do."

On the night they returned after reconciling, in a dream he saw a horse, tied to a plum tree, dragging its tail against the wall of their empty house under heavy rain. The house was empty. In the dark, the enormous horse suddenly shrank into the blue plastic basin, its flesh disintegrating like newspaper and its bones exposed. The giant head of the horse fell into his lap, its enormous eyes staring into his own. All night, he tried to hide the bloody horse head, fearing someone would ask why he had killed the horse.

Upcoming events cast their shadows beforehand.

James Joyce

Grandfather's House

While their father was in the military, they first stayed at their middle uncle's house in Çatalfırın. After their father returned from service, they lived in a rented house in Gece Mahallesi, and following their grandmother's death, they moved to their grandfather's wooden house in Şehreküstü, adjacent to a mosque. Both of his aunts would frequently visit their grandfather in this wooden house.

The cobblestone street where horse-drawn carriages passed ran in front of the house. Across the street was the Ahmet Paşa Cemetery, and behind the house lay a vast, empty area. In the distance, one could see the prison where Nazım Hikmet had once been held. Only a few houses were scattered below, toward the Mapushane side.

On August 18, 1950, Ahmet, his grandfather, ignored the nurses shouting, "What are you doing, uncle? Why are you putting into the newborn baby's mouth what you chewed in your own?" and shoved a chewed date into the baby's mouth at the maternity ward. Since his grandfather had always worn a robe over his back and a turban on his head, it is likely he had come to the hospital in that attire and scolded the nurses with, "So that he may learn to read,

you cursed fools!" Bay G sometimes wondered if his grandfather's extreme obsession with reading and writing might have been influenced by the date he had eaten at birth.

During World War II, before Bay G's mother arrived in Bursa with her three older brothers, her father—the mufti in Hayrabolu—passed away. Therefore, she had never met her own father, but Bay G, having lived with his father's father, Ahmet, until the age of nine, knew him well. His grandfather, Ahmet from Langaza and a population exchange migrant, had no known profession. He would go to Ulucami in the morning and, on his way back in the late afternoon, buy a bowl of yogurt, slice bread into it, and eat it with buttermilk. Bay G remembered from his father's stories that his father also did not get along with his grandfather, who had once shouted "You cursed dog!" at him and had broken a lute his father bought in his youth.

For some reason, because Bay G was frail, his grandfather did not like him and would give the dried figs, Turkish delights, pastilles, and hazelnuts he hid under his pillow to Bay G's sibling instead. According to his grandfather, his sibling was the "toklu," meaning a one-year-old lamb. His grandfather had gone on the pilgrimage to Mecca three times. On some occasions, he had gone on behalf of wealthier people, leaving insufficient money at home, so during these trips, his grandmother stayed with his aunt.

Bay G thought that this branch must carry a great sin. Years later, while watching a documentary about the Great Barrier Reef in Australia on television, he remembered the piece of coral his grandfather had brought back. The Great Barrier Reef was the only living thing visible from space. If people saw such a thing on another celestial body, they would make a huge fuss. Yet the miracle was right under their noses, and most people had never even heard its name.

His grandfather must have brought them something from the pilgrimage. The only thing Bay G could remember was a piece of white coral, about the size of a handful. As a child, he did not know it was coral; he saw the branch as a petrified piece of wood and thought it must carry a great sin. Years later, watching a documentary on the Great Barrier Reef, he remembered this piece of coral again.

From his sickbed, his grandfather would give the hazelnuts and peanuts to his sibling, but he needed Bay G's help to drive out the tenants living on the lower floor. Through the wooden floorboards, he could see the tenant family, Albanian immigrants, working noisily on a knitting frame. His grandfather wanted him to crawl under the bed and make noise by clashing the copper pots together. For some reason, his grandfather believed that the tenants, annoyed by the racket, would leave. Bay G followed his grandfather's orders, banging the pots under the bed all day for a week. At the end of the week, the tenants did not leave, but his grandfather passed away…

No matter how hard he tried, he could never remember the kitchen in that house. It was impossible that the house had no kitchen, but perhaps the house was so small that the copper pots were kept under his grandfather's bed. Later, his aunt's married daughter and her

husband lived as tenants on the lower floor. After they moved to Alemdar, in 1961, the lower-floor tenant uncle was among the first workers to go to Germany.

Once, on a candlelit day, he was sent to the grocery for yogurt. Because some children blocked the path with a rope, he did not see the incoming horse-drawn carriage. The horse leaped over him, and he only managed to see the wheels passing on either side. It could have been a serious accident—he might have been crippled or killed by a kick—but only the yogurt spilled, and he escaped without even a scratch.

He barely remembered his grandmother. When he was six, she had a stroke while washing laundry at the tub and died. He only knew her name: Kerime. His parents said she had been very stubborn. She would shout at his grandfather, “Why are you buying these crooked pieces of wood?” and throw them into the street. After her death, his aunts saw that his grandfather might remarry and promised to find a suitable partner for him. For some reason, at that time, his grandfather took the idea very seriously and even asked his mother if he could marry a passing woman from the street.

Because his aunts kept delaying matters, his grandfather fell ill and died before remarrying. Prayers were recited in the house. At that time, the road being opened for the new Santral Garaj caused his grandfather’s house to be expropriated. His younger sibling, very small at the time, looked at the cemetery across the street and said, “Everyone is dying; these places will be ours.”

He completed the first two grades of priMeryem school at İstiklâl Elementary, near his grandfather’s house. When his grandfather died and the house was demolished, they moved to Alemdar Mahallesi in Sırameşeler, where his aunt’s husband had parceled out and sold his peach orchard. In 1959, it was hardly possible to call it a neighborhood—houses were widely spaced, and it was a newly formed shantytown where even the Soğanlı Köy guard rode his horse. The title deed for their new home was quite remarkable: it was listed as “Eşekyedi Boğazı.”

Memories are never as poignant as the things we forget.

Marty Rubin

Memories

In March 1953, my father was in the army, and we were at my uncle’s house with my mother. My aunt was praying with a white prayer cloth, and the cupboard doors started rattling. We were on the ground floor of the two-story wooden house. Quickly, my mother, my aunt, and I ran out into the garden. These are the first memories I have: the rattling doors and the

darkness I saw in the plain below from the garden. After staying in the garden for a while, we went back inside. This was the Gönen-Yenice earthquake, which killed more than 200 people and destroyed many houses. Even though the images in my memory are not very clear, these were the first memories that affected me enough to stay with me. How sad that a person's first memory is an earthquake… I have always been annoyed that my first memories are related to an earthquake. It could have started with a pleasant memory instead—a sweet fruit, a nice toy, a fun game—but my first memory in my brain was of the ground shaking.

My father, a tall and handsome man, was my uncle's tailor apprentice at the time. Later, in 1963, my uncle and father served on the board of one of the five teams that would form Bursaspor, called Çelikspor. My younger brother was born in the house we rented in Gece Mahallesi before we moved to my grandfather's house, and my father came from the Stadium after his birth. He wore a thick coat, the kind Humphrey Bogart wore in old black-and-white films. Out of excitement that his second son had been born, he must have hugged me too, and I could smell the cold from the street on his cheek and the cigarette on his coat—I will never forget it. Why couldn't I forget that cold mixed with cigarette smoke? Did I think they finally treated me like a man?

My father and uncle smoked Gelincik cigarettes. I always saw a thin white cardboard pack with a red poppy on it. I think it was sleeting outside, or at least that's how I remember it. The coldness on my father's cheek seemed like a harbinger of our future relationship. I don't understand why my eyes well up when I tell this, but I feel the ache inside me.

Also, while my father was in the army, when a couple visiting my uncle from Thrace came to Bursa, I recounted my parents' wedding to them in nearly every detail. I must have been three or four years old, and I told the story so vividly that the visitors later asked others whether my mother and father had married after I was born. Whether you call it imagination, fabrication, or lying, this tendency in me started when I was three or four.

A similar incident happened when I was in middle school. My uncle, a doctor from Hayrabolu, came to Bursa with his wife and children. They left the young children with me and my cousin of the same age and went to a betrothal. It was stormy and windy, and I told the small children the story of a man who went to a castle in such terrible weather and knocked on the door.

The story was absurd, and its purpose was that, after being told in a low voice, I would suddenly shout, "Who ate my liver?" to scare the small, unsuspecting children. I shouted so loudly at the end that the children were genuinely frightened and began to cry. As if their crying wasn't enough, the power went out at that moment. In the dark, lit only by lightning, my cousin and I could not calm the children, who continued crying for a long time until the adults returned home. Of course, I received a ton of scolding for frightening them with such a ridiculous story. I think this is how my adventure of storytelling and writing began. What's even stranger is that the same adults who scolded me later said, "Come on, tell us too—what's this story everyone's so scared of?" They scolded, but they wanted to hear the story as well.

Another memory from my uncle's house when I was very small involves the threshold of a room. My uncles from Izmir came to Bursa in the summer, and lunch was served around a large tray on the floor. I was told to fetch the watermelon tray from the kitchen. I did so, everything was fine until I reached the doorway, where I tripped on the threshold. The tray flew from my hands, and I remember the red watermelon slices in the air, and my fastidious grandmother from Izmir, seated nearest the threshold, having the slices fall on her white prayer cloth.

Had I studied in Ankara for a year and a half, dropped out of METU, and gone to Poland to become a film director, I would have shot this scene in slow motion: the watermelon slices falling through the air. The surprised look on my grandmother's face, with juice splashing her, and a slice sliding down her forehead, would naturally complete the slow-motion effect.

The municipal buses heading to the outskirts neighborhoods of Hürriyet and Adalet also passed through Sırameşeler. On this road, formerly İzmir Yolu, there were incredibly large oak trees that were later cut down for road expansion. To get to our house, one would get off the bus at Alemdar stop, just one before Sırameşeler. As a child, I reasoned that the top stop being covered and the bottom stop being open was because the residents underneath were poor.

Some people are so dark that they burn you just to see a light.
Kamand Kojouri

To Burn the Canaries

Bay G had watched *To Kill a Mockingbird* in middle school. He had been deeply affected, not so much by the child actors but by the courtroom scenes. Perhaps it was the story being told from a child's perspective that moved him so much. The theme of killing a mockingbird in the film symbolized the injustice suffered by the innocent—being harmed or accused unfairly. In the black-and-white movie, Gregory Peck played Atticus Finch, the white lawyer defending a Black man falsely accused of rape. Atticus, having lost his wife during the Great Depression, tried to raise his children to be good people.

Some fathers paid close attention to their children. Bay G's uncle, for instance, went to Istanbul every Wednesday and brought back all kinds of toys for his kids. In the film, Atticus also teaches his children that it is a sin to kill innocent mockingbirds because they sing for people, telling them, "Remember, it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

Bay G's father loved birds. When he was in middle school, his father would dress up and go to canary cafés on Sundays. Bay G had never actually seen one, but apparently, canaries were sold there, and people listened to their songs. Later, his father converted a cabinet in the living room into a canary cage, bought many canaries, and started keeping them from floor to ceiling. The canaries were brought in small paper bags with holes, their eggs were boiled, they were fed small grains, and the large cage was regularly cleaned. Eventually, his father expanded the operation to a small house in the garden.

Going back a bit, that small house had been built after a quarrel between Bay G's parents. His uncle had given money to his mother, which his father tried to claim, but they eventually agreed to use it to build the little house, making peace. The children, however, disapproved of keeping birds in the house, perhaps siding with their mother.

At some point, someone must have stopped his father, because the canaries and their little house survived. But one day, a contagious disease struck, and the canaries began dying one by one. His father became enraged, pacing back and forth indoors, smoking, possibly thinking he could have sold them for money. Then, in a fit of fury, he grabbed a bottle of kerosene and tried to set the birds on fire. Bay G didn't remember exactly how much fuel was spread, but apparently, someone intervened before he could strike the match, saving the canaries and their house.

In Bay G's mind, the canaries immediately took the place of the mockingbirds in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Like the film's birds, they sang innocently. Trying to burn them was a profound injustice, yet his father had staged the act as a show of power. Bay G wondered how anyone could have stopped him—if he truly wanted to, he could have burned the birds and the house. Likely, as always, he had raged with the kerosene bottle, frightening everyone, but ultimately, out of fear of his wife's pleas, had refrained. It had all been a performance.

This tendency to threaten destruction resurfaced in 1974 when Bay G went to the Netherlands over child support matters. His father called from Maastricht, threatening to burn the single-story white house if legal actions were taken. Bay G dismissed the bluff, replying from Amsterdam, "If you don't, I'll remember!"

After retiring from the Netherlands and returning home, his father took up birds again—this time pigeons. For the children, who had claimed never to like birds, it would take many years to face the reality of enjoying them. When Bay G's daughter bought a parakeet for her mother's birthday, Bay G suddenly volunteered to care for it. That bird, named Şaşkın, formed the beginning of a deep bond between him and the parakeet. Şaşkın died in his lap, and for a long time afterward, every bird's chirp brought grief.

Even when his children claimed not to like birds, they discovered, slowly, that their love for birds ran deep, a reflection of the genetic inheritance from their father. Whether they liked the birds or not, whether they approved of their parents' behavior, those genes were a subtle reminder that they could never stray far from family patterns. Even as a child, this truth was invisible, but as they grew, recognizing it in themselves—especially in light of Oğuz Atay's words to his father, "I'm becoming more like you, Dad: I dislike everyone. I don't look in the mirror much, but when people talk about things I hate, I feel my face scrunch like yours"—they felt its profound weight.

…some nights I would sneak out and listen to the radio
in my father's old Chevrolet — children need solitude —
they don't teach that at school…

John Geddes

Hearing the Distances

When they first moved to Alemdar, they weren't even aware of whether they could hear the distances. After the early 1960s, radio sounds slowly began to be heard in the shantytowns. Voices from *Yurttan Sesler* Choir, *Arkası Yarın*, Orhan Boran, and Yuki could now be heard in the neighborhood. Occasionally, Western music appeared on programs broadcast by the Istanbul and Ankara radios, and young people riding the old railway just below İzmir Road whistled the song *I Found My Love in Portofino*.

Perhaps because he had some issues in common with certain members of the Beatles, whenever these unknown young people sang in Liverpool, some part of his brain would vibrate as if it understood what they were saying. At that time, of course, he didn't know that Paul McCartney's mother had died when he was 14, or that John Lennon's mother had died in a traffic accident. He had no idea about the letter *i* in English. The song that affected him the most was probably *With Love From Me to You*. In that song, it was as if a shared frequency was broadcasting from Liverpool to Bursa through the Nevtron radio in the single-story white house in Alemdar.

Although he could barely understand the lyrics of the Beatles songs he first listened to late at night in his middle-school English, these songs created strange vibrations in his brain. The Nevtron radios were very new, but he had begun singing along with a middle-school friend without understanding the English words, and the songs written by someone far away, in pain, started to circulate in Bay G's mind:

"If there's anything that you want,
If there's anything I can do,
Just call on me
And I'll send it to you
With love from me to you."

Bay G had begun to hear the distances. The fact that the brain of someone living in Alemdar and the brain of someone shouting in Liverpool could resonate on the same wavelength was not something easily explained.

The famous guitarist of the Beatles, John Lennon, in his 1970 *Plastic Ono Band* album, in the song *Mother*, vividly expressed how personal pain could be turned into music:

Mother, you had me, but I never had you I wanted you, you didn't want me So I, I just got to tell you Goodbye, goodbye

Father, you left me, but I never left you I needed you, you didn't need me So I, I just got to tell you Goodbye, goodbye

At the end of this song, the repeated line *"Mother don't go, Father come home"* gradually escalates into screams as the song ends. What makes it interesting is that the song reflects John Lennon's real-life experiences. When Lennon was six, he had to choose between his separated parents and chose his mother. However, later his mother Julia also left him. Ten years later, when he reunited with his mother, she was killed in a traffic accident, and Lennon lost her a second time. The song was essentially the cries of John Lennon, in pain from the conflicts between his mother and father.

In the opening lyrics of the song he wrote for Julia, Lennon says half of what he sings is meaningless: *"Half of what I say is meaningless, but I say it to reach you, Julia Julia, Julia, ocean girl is calling me."* His mother Julia, who was hit and killed by a drunk policeman, had a banjo, and she had taught Lennon to play rock with the banjo. Bay G would later wonder whether this influenced Lennon's guitar style, whether he favored the upper four strings on guitar as he did on banjo.

When he was young, if asked, he would say he found the Beatles very entertaining. As he grew older, he understood the pain and sorrow embedded in the songs much better. One of his favorites was *Two of Us*, which narrates a Sunday outing that goes nowhere and ends back home. Much later, in 1976, when he gave up music and began his academic career, Bay G once told a friend: *"There may be other reasons too, but at the heart of rock music are the endless family problems with parents that drive young people crazy."*

The roots of family conflicts were very old. In Greek mythology, the last Titan Cronus, with a steel sickle given to him by his mother, castrated his father — the first account of father-son friction. In Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, King Oedipus was cursed by Apollo, destined to kill his father and marry his mother. The jealousy between Cain and Abel leading to the first murder was another historical example of intra-family conflict. Dostoevsky's famous *The Brothers Karamazov* depicted three rival brothers fighting over inheritance, with suicide, betrayal, and patricide.

As Bay G learned all this, he sometimes even thought that the conflicts in his own family weren't so bad after all.

"I'm making a list of all the things they don't teach you at school.
They don't teach you how to love somebody.
They don't teach you how to be famous.
They don't teach you how to be rich or how to be poor.
They don't teach you how to walk away from someone you don't love anymore.
They don't teach you how to know what's going on in someone else's mind.
They don't teach you what to say to someone who's dying.
They don't teach you anything worth knowing."

Neil Gaiman

School

He had read somewhere—he recounted how his mentor, Professor Sencer Divitçioğlu, whom he assisted, had persuaded him to stay in school by saying, "It's fine that you're into music now, but by the time you're fifty, you'll end up in a bar or a nightclub." Asaf Savaş Akat was actually lucky to have a professor who would advise him. But as in every matter, Mr. G had to carve his own path. Even without the fear of ending up in a bar, he had instinctively steered himself toward an academic career. When he got married, the joke his wife made, "I rescued this man from the nightclub," was just a pleasant jest, reminiscent of the warnings his professor had given him to his assistant.

Even in his early years, the *Doğan Kardeş* magazine he read, the few films he watched, and the city library he visited during summer vacations in middle school had had a significant impact on him. Regarding schools, the elementary school he attended was old and had been just a foundation for him… Moreover, in elementary school, he had been scolded by the principal for telling a story a friend had told him about the teacher, who once lined up the dandruff on his head. The school was poorly maintained; students had to use the basement toilets, standing in pools of uric acid two or three centimeters deep. From elementary school, he only remembered the classroom where they had lessons, the historical timeline on the wall, images depicting the seasons, and his wooden pencil box.

In the third grade, a very stylish female teacher with blonde hair came to the class. Much later, he learned she was the wife of a police chief. She walked around with a ruler in her hand, yelling that anyone who didn't memorize the multiplication table would have "boza cooked on their neck." Most of the class, probably not knowing what that meant, were scared. Mr. G, who would later develop a close relationship with mathematics, at that time wanted to escape school, hiding in the toilet in his grandfather's garden, imagining with fear the boiling cauldron on his neck, just to avoid the multiplication table.

Being thrown into boiling cauldrons was a common cautionary tale in those days, and now the "boza on the neck" punishment had appeared. The fear of the boiling cauldron caused by the multiplication table led him to consider staying in the toilet, pretending his stomach hurt, to get through the school hours. It was a disgusting, shameful feeling, like a foul odor. Suddenly

it would spread from his mind outward and then begin to follow him. Even when looking at the cemetery across the street, where someone was occasionally buried with prayers being recited, he felt the same fear, the same spreading odor. Eventually, his family realized he was afraid and reminded the teacher not to scare him. Perhaps unknowingly, they prevented someone who might later have a close relationship with mathematics from developing a deep aversion to it.

Years later, when he reached middle age and watched a documentary on TV titled *"Dangerous School Journeys"*, he understood just how lucky he had been. In the documentary, there were children in Africa who walked five hours to school, navigating through herds of angry elephants and bulls, terrified of dying. To prevent the animals from detecting their scent and sensing their fear, they walked for hours against the wind, watching the direction the grass bent, as if living inside a horror film. Remembering the physical conditions of the schools he had attended, the teachers, and other deficiencies, Mr. G realized how fortunate he had been—but evidently, the scent of fear was a universal problem.

He had learned some reading and writing, the multiplication table, and the prayers his mother had made him memorize during elementary school. Every day, standing on the back platform of the municipal bus, he went to school with a girl from the neighborhood with braided hair, who attended the same school. The ticket collector would mock them daily with, "Leyla and Mecnun, what's up?" Around that time, he also learned to be afraid of the spirits and fairies said to roam near hot springs and baths in the neighborhood during night wanderings. Fear was everywhere.

His first year in middle school passed watching a soon-to-retire math teacher dozing at his window-side desk. In the post-lunch hours, sunlight cast patchy shadows over the teacher as he slept, while the class's laughter and noise grew to the brink of waking him. In the second year, a teacher nicknamed "Archimedes" taught him a lot of mathematics. He now knew that the sum of the squares of a right triangle's legs equaled the square of the hypotenuse. In the second and third years, a female Turkish teacher paid a lot of attention to him. She would ask if he had written the notes himself, scolding him at home, and also inquired about his parents' occupations. With a friend from class, he listened to the Beatles and Cliff Richard on the radio, trying to sing along.

The middle school he attended was an old masonry building with a decent auditorium by the standards of the time, suitable for plays and musical performances. One Saturday, he sneaked into a boys' high school show and listened, wide-eyed, to the high school band covering instrumental songs by the famous group *The Shadows*. He became so absorbed that his parents worried about his whereabouts.

He and a friend, who had been his companion from middle school through high school and later attended METU with him, went to the cinema to watch *Summer Holiday*, a film by *The Shadows* featuring Cliff Richard. A teacher candidate from the nearby Education Institute had taught him a bit of mandolin at his father's shop in elementary school, which he continued to practice on his own. Those elementary school mandolin lessons, along with everything else, deepened his interest in music.

When it came time for high school, he enrolled in a school closer to home because middle school had been uphill and far. However, he had no idea whether the newly opened high school was good. The convenience of the bus route and proximity appealed to him, though his friends disagreed. They later saw him on the city's main street during their custoMeryem evening strolls and asked whether he had enrolled. According to them, he should have attended Bursa Boys' High School. Upset that he didn't, they even went with a small group to his school, confronted the vice principal, and insisted he be enrolled in Bursa Boys' High School.

He had friends knowledgeable enough to make decisions that ideally his parents should have made. Later, he would understand how right their guidance had been and be grateful. Thinking of this always reminded him of the song *With a Little Help From My Friends*. His parents had seemed involved in which middle school he attended, but perhaps due to his father's business troubles or a strained relationship, they hadn't paid attention when it came to high school.
One year, the married male math teacher eloped with the unmarried female biology teacher, making it another wasted year for mathematics. The subsequent two years, however, were exceptional. The elderly white-haired teacher who taught algebra and geometry truly benefited him throughout life. On Saturdays, he and his friends played football in a vacant lot and continued to engage deeply with music.

According to him, the high school teachers were the elite of the time. They had graduated from science or literature faculties and were highly knowledgeable. The two teachers who most influenced him were his algebra-geometry teacher and his literature teacher. Particularly, the white-haired algebra teacher advocated for students to attend either Istanbul Technical University or METU. Mr. G admired watching him solve algebra problems on the board, using colored chalk with unmatched skill. That white-haired teacher assigned so much homework that while others played football on weekends, he stayed inside completing it, watching the others from the window. High school years passed quickly. Nearly half of his graduating class went to METU, the other half to ITU—a remarkable achievement, reflecting a great deal of effort.

The guitar was my weapon,
my shield to hide behind.

Brian May

Guitar

During his final year at Boys' High School, one of Mr. G's classmates, whose father lived near his uncle's house, lost his father. Some time later, the classmate's mother bought him an acoustic guitar to ease a little of her tall, sturdy son's grief. That year, their class had a music band equipped with amplifiers, electric guitars, and drums. Mr. G admired that band greatly, along with two of his friends. The band was genuinely well-equipped. Another friend who played solo guitar in the band had an uncle who gave music lessons, and that friend could read sheet music and play the guitar thanks to what he learned from his uncle. The uncle, who taught music, also owned a shop at the top of the hill leading to the high school, selling sheet music, guitars, and drumsticks.

One day, Mr. G and his two school friends decided to stop just admiring and took action—they formed their own band. Besides Mr. G, the band included the tall friend whose mother had bought the guitar and another friend who had learned the lyrics of Beatles songs from his mother's magazine. The friend who wanted to play drums went to the music store and bought two drumsticks. Ignoring what others said, they formed the band with those two drumsticks and the guitar of the friend whose father had died. Yet they had no idea how pitifully under-equipped they were in terms of both knowledge and instruments. But for them, no lack mattered—they simply wanted to form a band like the one they admired.

All they had in hand was an acoustic guitar and two drumsticks…

Moreover, at that time they didn't know that guitars existed even among the Hittites in Alacahöyük, Çorum; that the guitar was an instrument native to the land where Mr. G lived; or that Beethoven had said, "The guitar is a miniature orchestra in itself." What was certain, however, was that the sound of the guitar they heard in Beatles songs had taken up permanent residence in Mr. G's ears, ringing there at every possible moment.

In fact, Mr. G had no other musical capital except for his mandolin skills. Although they weren't aware of it, they drew strength from Victor Hugo's words: "Poverty is no hindrance to imagination." Around that time, another friend became captivated by a red electric guitar he had seen in a shop window and, with extraordinary craftsmanship, eventually made an exact replica by hand. That talented friend later moved to England due to the student unrest in the late 1960s, spent 41 years restoring antique clocks, and eventually returned to Turkey. Indeed, poverty was no barrier to imagination.

Their deficiencies didn't matter to them. They seemed enchanted by the very idea of forming a band and were genuinely happy to have done so. Surely, over time, they imagined themselves having expensive guitars and amplifiers—and they did. By the 1980s, if you had told three young people in those conditions to form a band, they would have immediately said, "We want guitars and amplifiers like theirs, let's form one…" Yet they had started chasing their dreams regardless of circumstances. Their conditions were far from realistic, and their only capital was the driving force of imagination.

When they formed the band *Lekeler* (Stains), Mr. G, thanks to his mandolin experience, began playing his friend's acoustic guitar. The friend who wanted to play drums used his two drumsticks and a plywood table at home as a makeshift drum set, while the other friend handled vocals. That plywood table eventually broke. Undeterred, they even performed at the high school graduation meeting, shouting and singing on top of a ping-pong table. Amid the noise, it was impossible to tell who was listening.

Later, a friend who played bass in the band came from a wealthier family. His father was an industrialist and politically connected. Rehearsals sometimes took place at Mr. G's house, sometimes at their friend's. At that time, wealthy families never cared about the economic status of the parents of their children's friends. Wealth, poverty, neighborhood, or property did not create strict divisions among people—this continued until the 1980s.

Since Mr. G didn't have an amplifier, they initially shared the richer friend's amplifier. Later, when they began performing at a family cabaret in the city's largest park throughout the summer, the amplifier issue resurfaced. His friends suggested he buy an amplifier and promised to reimburse him later.

One night, Mr. G and his mother pondered the decision almost until dawn, worrying what would happen if he bought the amplifier and couldn't repay his friends. They made tea, thought, dozed, woke up, and thought some more. Toward morning, his mother finally said, "Well, there's no death, after all—just get the instrument." Together with his friends, he went to Yüksekkaldırım in Istanbul and bought the amplifier. The band *Lekeler* was now moving beyond humble beginnings; their music endeavor was beginning to take a professional shape.

Building trust takes years,
breaking it takes seconds,
repairing it takes an eternity.

Jesse Lyn Stoner

Netherlands

As Bay G was moving into his final year of high school, he began getting excellent grades in mathematics. His father, returning from a parent-teacher meeting, told how other parents were surprised when they saw the grades written on a piece of paper in his hand. While Bay G was excelling in math, things at his father's tailor shop were going very badly. After initially giving up tailoring to sell milk and yogurt without much success, he closed his shop on the main street of the city and opened a small tailor workshop in a shack near the İzmir Road in the neighborhood. Business still wasn't good. As a result of all these difficulties, by the time Bay G graduated from high school, his father had to move to the Netherlands, with the help of a tailor friend who had gone there earlier and started working.

The distance was calling his father. He was no longer home. His mother told him, "He won't get up early or work. Will those foreigners be able to handle him there?"—stoking his anxieties and convincing him that his father would never be able to work in the Netherlands. According to them, someone who gets up late and is generally lazy could never make it there. Both he and his mother were pessimistic. Somehow, they both expected his father to fail in the Netherlands and return. They thought they would send him back in a few weeks—but things did not turn out that way. His father started sending money home via İş Bank in the city where he lived in the Netherlands. Somehow, the Dutch had managed to make his father work. When he jokingly told his mother, "Maybe my father had a secret 'Activate Work' button somewhere that we didn't know about, and the Dutch found it and pressed it," she didn't laugh at all. She said, "No button works on your father. Don't you think I know him? He's probably making them sweat."

Much later, after the friend who had taken his father to the Netherlands retired and returned to Bursa, he revealed that his father did not share household chores in the Netherlands like

cooking or washing dishes, and instead, he would read the newspaper after meals and even ask the friend to make him coffee. His father was truly irresponsible, truly lazy.

Letters from his father described how he was adjusting to life in the Netherlands, staying as a boarder with an elderly Yugoslav woman. In the early days there, he began going to work late in the mornings, as usual, which eventually forced his manager to send him to the company doctor. The doctor diagnosed him with something like, "You're adapting to life in the mornings." His mother thought, "These foreigners are truly foolish. They'll put a polite name on laziness and think the problem is solved. Adapt, adapt—all talk; the man is lazy. Give me some food, let me sleep. Sooner or later they'll figure it out, but oh well…"

In fact, the situation was neither that simple nor were the foreigners foolish. Later, they realized the truth. When his father first went to the Netherlands, he worked in a high-end store selling men's and women's ready-to-wear clothing. His job was to alter garments that didn't fit properly, shortening sleeves or skirts. The doctor and managers did not complain about his lateness; however, they expected him to make up for the morning lost hours by working later in the evenings to ensure the garments were adjusted to the customers' satisfaction. His father was happy to go in late, and the managers were happy to have a skilled tailor. The so-called foolish foreigners actually knew very well how to employ him.

At the end of the first year, his father returned for the summer holidays and brought Bay G an electric guitar as a gift. They rented a small shack by the seaside for their holiday. Bay G had graduated from high school, passed the university entrance exams, and gotten into METU, and it seemed as though everything was finally starting to improve. Yet, past experiences were not easily forgotten. Back when his father worked in Turkey, he had once promised to take them to a tent for summer vacation, and his mother had prepared beds and quilts, but in the late afternoon, his father came home shouting and ruined everything, just as usual.

After all this, what followed was truly unbelievable. There was little point in dwelling on the past; they were happy—or Bay G believed they were. Thanks to a Kennedy scholarship at METU, he lived like a king in Ankara, bought countless foreign books and magazines, watched films as a Sinematek member, and dreamed with a friend about running away to Poland to become a film director.

Yet this happiness lasted only a year or two. Meanwhile, his mother gave birth to a sister, making four family members in total. Between the country's and METU's constant turmoil, by the time he was finishing his second year at METU, his father suddenly stopped sending money from the Netherlands. He no longer answered his mother's letters. His mother repeatedly urged him to write to his father to ask why, but he too received no reply. It was as if his father had severed all ties with them. There was no one in the Netherlands to explain why he was doing this. They were left helpless, penniless, and alone.

Three of his uncles gathered at the house of an uncle living in Ankara to discuss his financial difficulties and future. They offered to support him so he could continue his studies. Bay G strongly opposed, saying, "I have no doubt about your goodwill, but in the future, your children will reproach me for the money you give me. I cannot endure that, so I will not accept money from you." His uncles, in unison, scolded him for being rebellious and stubborn, warning that

with this mindset he would never amount to anything. His aunt in Ankara repeatedly called him “foolish.” Years later, reflecting on that day, Bay G realized it had taken enormous courage to refuse his well-meaning uncles’ offer in those circumstances. That day, he had taken a big risk, choosing between being a mediocre chemist or knowing himself and pursuing work he loved.

At the same time, financial troubles aside, Bay G faced significant academic challenges. He had never liked the chemistry department and wanted to transfer to mathematics, but after failing a high-credit chemistry course, that path was blocked. When he asked a professor to allow him to transfer, he wasn’t even properly heard. His father’s cutting off of financial support was the last straw. Although his father had once again failed to act responsibly, Bay G also bore the consequences of not fully knowing what he wanted.

Bay G packed his bags, left METU behind, and returned home to Bursa. He knew that friends at METU felt sorry for him, saying, “His life is ruined.” His father had effectively forced him to leave the university. The future seemed bleak, and any sense of hope was quickly erased. Later, whenever he remembered those days, Robert-Francois Damiens came to his mind—the man who, in 1757, attempted to assassinate French King Louis XV and was executed by having each limb tied to a horse and pulled in opposite directions. Bay G felt that he might have identified with Damiens in those extreme moments.

Thanks to the support of his uncles, especially the one in Bursa, he began living in a small house within a garden and rented out the single-story white house. The roof of the small house made it sweltering in summer. He had nothing to hold onto for hope in the future—except for the electric guitar waiting for him in one room of the white house in Alemdar.

After returning from METU to Bursa, he began making new friends. A friend in the neighborhood had a small grocery store, and Bay G would sit on a sugar sack in the corner at night, chatting about life. That winter was perhaps the worst of his life.

He struggled to fit in back in Alemdar, and his long hair drew stares from neighbors. If he had faced this problem later in life, he would have cut his hair immediately, but at 21, compromise was not an option.

He found work at a place called Orkide Pavyon, which gave him some hope; he would play solo guitar there. New colleagues warned him that the “pavyon” was a sketchy place where, even if a gunfight broke out, the boss would say, “You kids just keep playing.” He had never been to such a place before. A childhood friend recounted that when he was 14, his father had taken him to a match in Izmir, and afterwards, fans went into a pavyon, and his father had danced with a woman wearing his coat inside. His father had warned, “Boys keep secrets,” and had given him money so that he never told his mother. According to his friend, such venues were not safe, and women there dressed provocatively. Another friend working at the grocery store at night said, “Work is work, you watch your money, man. Everyone pays extra to talk to those women. You’ll be in the middle. We might come by sometimes.”

Though his colleagues tried to help him, he only managed to work for a week. The money he earned barely covered taxi fares home at night, and walking home risked dog attacks.

Eventually, he quit. He felt trapped again, as if bound like Robert-Francois Damiens, pulled in four directions by horses.

Though he appeared carefree, he actually had persistent dreams about failing to finish high school. In his dreams, he was constantly getting documents from school, being expelled, and unable to enter university without a diploma.

Mounting pressures weighed heavily on him. Until age 13–14, he had been a sleepwalker, and on several occasions had to be guided back to bed after opening the street door at night. At that time, a tutor in a village near Bursa had predicted that he would suffer from tuberculosis around age 20 but could be cured with butter and honey. Later, he realized the prediction was based on his frail physique.

Despite constant anxiety, he found the strength to retake the university entrance exam. The former Education Institute building, near his father's old tailor shop, was now an academy. He applied to the only higher education institution in Bursa at that time—the Academy of Economic and Commercial Sciences—and won admission. A new path had opened. The institution, supported by professors from Eskişehir and the Bursa Chamber of Commerce, had allowed Bay G to resume his education. He loved learning and working.

In summer, he and two friends who had returned from METU found work playing at an open-air pavilion in the park.

In the fall, when he went to register at the academy, he was asked for a military deferment certificate. At the Tophane Military Office, he learned they could not issue it, and as a draft evader, he would be sent immediately to Sivas Temeltepe. His departure from METU had left him ineligible for deferment, creating a major problem.

He explained everything to his mother; the situation was again at an impasse. She remembered a retired colonel who had been their neighbor long ago. The colonel, who had worked at Işıklar Military High School, welcomed them, listened attentively, and promised to help the next morning at the Tophane Military Office.

The next day, the colonel argued from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with the office staff. They insisted he could not defer because of his METU status. Both the colonel and staff resisted all day, but finally, the captain relented and issued the deferment certificate at 5:00 p.m.

Bay G considered this a life-changing turning point. Had he not received deferment and been sent to serve in the military with his weak physique, he might never have recovered. Throughout his life, he prayed for Colonel Salih, who had entered his life for a brief but crucial moment and helped him on a path to a positive outcome. Bay G later even wondered if the colonel had been sent as a guardian angel. Whether the colonel had children or not, he could never know, but fate had placed this angel-like figure in his path at a critical juncture.

Our [Western] science has from its very beginnings
cut itself off from the understanding of the perceiving
subject and the mind. That is precisely the point
where our present way of thinking needs to be amended,
perhaps by a bit of blood-transfusion from Eastern thought.

Erwin Schrödinger

Elazığ

After playing for a while with the band in Bursa, Mr. G moved to Ankara when a friend from the band and university found a job there, and he started working at a nightclub called Beethoven. The name Beethoven immediately brought to his mind Stanley Kubrick's film *A Clockwork Orange*, based on Anthony Burgess's book. Ludwig van Beethoven's Fifth and Ninth Symphonies were almost like main characters in the film. As Alex said, "I woke up. On me were pain and disease, like an animal. Then I realized what had happened. The music rising from the floor was our old friend Ludwig van, and the terrible Ninth Symphony."

In Kızılay, they played for a while at the Beethoven nightclub under the name "Sultanlar." After some time, a saxophonist from Elazığ joined the group. Through his connections in Elazığ, he had found a job at a new nightclub opening there. He told them that if they went to Elazığ, they would earn a lot of money and that this was a big opportunity. As a band, with their long hair, they went to an event organization office in Maltepe to discuss the job. While waiting in the office hall to meet the organizer, Mr. G noticed a middle-aged woman wearing a black velvet cloak that reached the floor, with her hair in a bun, holding a large-beaded prayer rosary. She was pacing back and forth, describing someone to a seated man, saying, "Then take the machine and come, we'll meet in Etlik." Mr. G didn't understand what "machine" meant at first; he later learned it was slang for a gun. What were they doing in such strange places—they could get themselves into trouble. Though the office wasn't exactly their scene, the mention of money seemed to hypnotize them, and they had come to discuss the job offer from Elazığ.

When they entered the organizer's office, they met the owner of the nightclub in Elazığ. The owner was a short, stocky man in a brown suit, with a friendly face. He immediately took a stack of money from his pocket and handed it to the organizer, saying, "Give this money to the kids as an advance," and added, "But the hair will need to be cut; that's not done in Elazığ," as a warning. After taking the stack from his pocket, their eyes widened like cartoon characters' eyes popping out of their sockets as they watched the money fly slowly into the organizer's hands. The advance was such a significant sum that all four of them immediately went to the barber and had their hair cut.

The advance was a huge deal given their circumstances, which both delighted them and filled them with fear that someone might cheat them. The band temporarily set aside their music and spent time imagining scenarios of how they could be swindled. Mr. G, meanwhile, imagined the bun-wearing woman going to Etlik with her "machine," dueling in a scene reminiscent of a Western film.

None of them realized that due to land expropriations for the Keban Dam, Elazığ was experiencing an almost Wild West atmosphere, and that the number of nightclubs there actually exceeded those in Bursa. Someone wanted to pay them well to work in Elazığ, and they constantly feared that there was a catch.

Despite their confusion, they had the advance. A few days later, they loaded their instruments and sound system onto the train and set off for Elazığ. After a long, entertaining train journey, they arrived, only to find that not even a vehicle was available at the station to carry their equipment. Their instruments and sound system were transported by horse-drawn cart to Elazığ. The venue they were to work at, based on the address, was on the second floor and did not look much like a nightclub; it hadn't officially opened yet and no one was there. They began to suspect they had been scammed—someone was tricking them—when a young man appeared and said, "We've been expecting you," and took them to a hotel. The nightclub would open a week later because they couldn't get permission yet, but they would get their pay; their fears were unfounded.

A week later, the venue opened, and they began making a fortune by playing a few Barış Manço songs each night. At 21, Mr. G was indulging in the thrill of earning more money than he had ever seen. He constantly ate chocolate and spent the money he earned at one nightclub on a girl at another, likely under 18, dark-haired, slender, and resembling a famous pop singer. Each night she would tell him how she had escaped from the circus where she worked, and about the problems with her parents. He loved listening to these stories, spending money like a village lord.

In Ankara, he had read Jean-Paul Sartre's autobiography *Words*, in which Sartre wrote, "There is no good father, and that is a rule." The girl who resembled a famous singer constantly reminded him of Sartre's words: "Charles was going to be a priest. But Charles disappeared, and a circus boy chased the girl. His photo was turned upside down on the wall, and mentioning his name was forbidden." Unaware, he was beginning to do things similar to what his own father had done. During his days in Ankara, he had lived for a time with a girl who had run away from home in Antalya. Later, he would realize that part of his anger at his father was really anger at himself. At least his father hadn't fed money to anyone at a nightclub when he was 21.

The bandmate who played drums stopped Mr. G from giving money to the runaway girl and started withholding his pay. After some time, when Mr. G got himself together, his accumulated money was returned to him.

Almost every night, a well-dressed man in his mid-30s to 40s began coming to the nightclub. Upon his arrival, the waiters would rush him to a good table, bringing a bottle of whiskey and appetizers. A slightly plump, not particularly attractive woman from the hostess staff had also befriended him and would rush to his table whenever he arrived. The gentleman didn't stay long, drank little, left a bottle of whiskey on the table, paid, and left. This was proof of his wealth. Perhaps he had come to Elazığ regarding his family's expropriated lands.

One night something unexpected happened. The man called a waiter, wrote something on a napkin, and sent it to the stage. Mr. G and his friends read: "Dağdan kestim kereste, kuş

besledim kafeste" ("I cut timber from the mountain, I raised birds in the cage"). They didn't understand it; they had never heard of such a song or folk tune. Continuing to play on stage, they started asking each other what it meant. One possibility was that the man was teasing them. But if it really was a song, they would miss the opportunity to play it.

Considering this, Mr. G took his guitar off his neck, went to the waiters' room, and learned that it was indeed a song—a very well-known folk tune from Elazığ. Could a group of two guitars, organ, drums, and saxophone be asked to play a folk tune? In a nightclub, the customer was king. Mr. G had the waiters sing the chorus repeatedly, figured out he could play it in a few minutes, and quickly returned to the stage. After lowering his guitar's volume for a quick trial, he told his friends to watch, turned the volume to full, and played *Dağdan Kestim Kereste* while looking the man in the eye.

The gentleman, placing his right hand with all five fingers on his chest, expressed satisfaction at his request being fulfilled. He called the waiter again and sent them a generous tip. Mr. G hadn't asked for the sheet music; he didn't know how to read music. Acting like an amateur in this country had its advantages—he had simply done what was needed.

One morning, the parents of one of his bandmates came to Elazığ. The mother wore a mink coat. Both parents asked what their children were doing there and wanted to take them back to Bursa. The bandmate refused and stayed in Elazığ. Mr. G's father, meanwhile, didn't even know he was in Elazığ and was idly passing his days in the Netherlands.

Mr. G was beginning to understand that nothing was as it seemed. The man selling black-market tickets at the cinema by day came to the nightclub at night to buy whiskey at his table. Life and nightclubs were full of injustice. He could never understand how two mother-daughter hostesses could drink whiskey like water and remain sober. After working in Elazığ for three or four months, he returned to Bursa, continuing his studies at the Academy on his own.

During the time he wrote poems like, "The accounts of old loves / Do not easily enter amnesty" and "Even with slow steps / We are a rose with a growing heart / My darling, we are not alone," he had declared his own little kingdom with a few coins in his pocket, learning through experience that the East was very different from the West and from the world of nightclubs he knew.

While studying at the Academy, the money he earned playing guitar in Bursa nightclubs gave him independence. One evening he left home saying, "I'm going to the store to buy cigarettes," and returned three or four days later from Antalya. At the intercity bus terminal, he asked, "Is there space to Kuşadası?" and upon being told no, said, "Then give me a ticket to any city with space," leaving without informing his mother. When he returned home, his mother cursed, "I hope the kids do the same!"

Years later, when he was a professor, on a hot summer day in Bodrum Gündoğan, bored, he went down to the harbor. A local fisherman invited him onto his small boat for a beer. The fisherman told a young man working with him, "Elazığlı, give a beer to my professor," prompting Mr. G to realize how long it had been since 1971 when he had worked in Elazığ. He asked the young man if he remembered the nightclub and its owner; the reply was

unexpected. The young man knew the former nightclub owner, who had later opened a club in İzmir but had been stabbed and killed there a week prior.

Mr. G was stunned on the small fishing boat. The short, stocky, brown-suited man, whom he barely knew but who had enabled him to earn money, had died. The runaway girl from the circus, the wealthy man giving generous tips, the mother-daughter hostesses knocking back whiskey, the black-market ticket seller, the young folk singer working as a barber at night, the hostess writing letters as Zeyno Gelin urging him to run away together, the older hostess buying silver in Gaziantep—they all flashed before his eyes.

At that time, he was thinking about the impact of social networks and had mentioned in a book he was writing that week about Stanley Milgram's "small-world" or "six degrees of separation" hypothesis. According to this theory, the world is really small; any two strangers are connected through an average of six people. Facebook had reduced this average to about four. In his own experience, the deceased nightclub owner and he were connected through just one person—the young man working on the fishing boat. Social networks had an incredible mathematical logic that worked flawlessly. In our brains, neurons—about 100 trillion connections—formed incredibly complex networks, of which we could only perceive a tiny fraction. Borges viewed the universe as a library; similarly, Mr. G began to see it as a vast networked library of connections.

Life… For some, a battle; for others, a dance…
For the rich, a party; for the poor, a chance!

Nino Varsimashvili

Summer of 1974

His problems with his father reached a new point in the summer of 1974. Before 1970, his father had closed his tailor shop and then attempted to open, in the same location, a shop selling milk, yogurt, and cheese with his aunt's son as a partner. When his cousin backed out at the last minute, he had to open the dairy shop alone. Ultimately, the shop, launched with insufficient capital, could not survive and closed. His father then resumed tailoring in a shack in Sırameşeler. The fault was not his father's, but the rapid development of the ready-to-wear sector. Ready-made coats, overcoats, and suits had emerged; machines had been invented, tailoring was disrupted, and tailors were left jobless and penniless.

During this period, his father decided to sell their whitewashed house. People kept coming to view it. A Bulgarian immigrant neighbor woman, who had been a family friend for years and lived on the corner at the entrance to Söğütlü Street, was particularly helpful at the time. She would meet foreign buyers at the street's entrance and warn them that the house's basement flooded in winter, that there was nothing good about the house, and thus managed to drive potential buyers away.

His mother was very close friends with this neighbor, inseparable in fact. The neighbor's husband, known for saying "If we had a flashlight, we could shine it in the snake's eye" during a dispute involving a mulberry tree, had once owned a tannery in the nearby industrial area but went bankrupt. Despite his generosity, he came under strict financial control by his wife. The Bulgarian woman often told his mother about how his father in Bulgaria would chase away friends gathered in their yard for drinks. Frequently, the husband repaid the money borrowed by his wife from his mother. Bay G never saw the woman borrow money from his mother and could never understand why it was being repaid. In reality, no such debt existed; his mother returned the money to the wife. This was an extraordinary system of control among women, through which the generous man's financial oversight was maintained. Men walked around acting in control, but in reality, women quietly dismantled male authority through their own arrangements.

After graduating from Bursa Boys' High School, he began studying Chemistry at the Faculty of Science and Literature. His younger brother had finished Merinos Elementary School and, having passed the state boarding school exam, started studying at Bursa Boys' High School as a boarder. His brother had asthma, which made boarding school particularly hard for him.
In his second year at the academy, Bay G took the AISEC exam, an international internship exchange committee, and secured an internship in Dublin. He knew Dublin was chaotic at the time, but his main goal was not so much the internship as to go to the Netherlands and confront his father about the child support money. His mother shared the same view, though she did not directly say, "Go confront your father."

Around this time, Bay G learned for the first time that his father had a daughter in the Netherlands. His aunt's daughter, who worked in Germany, mentioned that her uncle was living with a Dutch woman and had a daughter with her. This story was not unknown to the aunt's daughter either. Years earlier, she had heard that her husband had grown close to another woman in Germany while leaving her behind in Turkey, and had quickly gone to Germany to separate them.

Bay G was learning for the first time that his father had a daughter in the Netherlands—a younger sister. Oddly enough, despite the upset it caused his mother, none of these rumors prompted her to declare, "I will divorce this man." How helpless they were. His father had first stopped sending money, and now, by having a child with a foreign woman, he had completely severed any connection—or lack thereof—they had.

During the summer of 1974, while studying at the academy, Bay G met a Dutchman named William and an Englishman named David at the AISEC office. He began plotting in his mind, trying especially to befriend William, which he partially succeeded at. When these two foreigners complained about cockroaches in their dorm, he immediately offered to host them at his house in Alemdar. They accepted and, loading their belongings onto William's small convertible Citroën, came to stay for a month in the single-story white house in Alemdar.

David was quiet and calm, but William, always loud and smoking, attempted to go barefoot to the garden toilet. His mother exclaimed, "As if it weren't enough, now these infidels have come. How will I pray in this house?" Eventually, the foreigners learned to wear the garden

clogs to go to the toilet. Since it was summer, short trips to seaside resorts in William's car were a unique pleasure for Bay G and his close friends.

As their friendship progressed, Bay G told William about his father not sending child support and his plan to go to the Netherlands to resolve the matter. He recounted that his father lived with a Dutch woman in Maastricht-Heerlen and had a young daughter there, based on what his aunt's daughter in Germany had told him. William offered to help if he came to the Netherlands. After a month, the foreigners returned to their countries.

Bay G began exploring how to get a passport and travel to the Netherlands cheaply. After summer vacation, he asked his aunt's daughter and her husband if he could accompany them to Germany. They agreed and drove him to Germany as Turkish workers were returning in convoys at the end of summer. Upon arrival, the aunt's daughter called his father to arrange for Bay G to take a train to Aachen, near Heerlen.

At the Aachen station, he met his father, the Dutch woman he was living with, and his three-year-old daughter, Mirjam. Although he now knew about his father's foreign partner and daughter, it was the first time he saw all three together. The train station felt eerily quiet, as if the sounds of a shattered piano were echoing—someone smashing a piano with a hatchet, its scattered tones sliding between sharps, flats, and dissonances.

The woman was named Else, meaning "other" in Dutch. Bay G immediately noticed she was plumper than his mother and, by Dutch standards, brunette rather than blonde. Years later, the Dutch sister Meryem told him that Else's first husband was a gambling addict who neglected her after having two children.

Bay G carefully observed his three-year-old sister, noting her wavy hair and light-colored eyes, similar to one of his aunts. She held their mother's hand and looked at him. Although reluctantly, he shook her hand—there was no other choice. He never blamed the Dutch woman or her daughter; his father was the one responsible.

Else did not speak English, and Meryem was too young. They were taken to a small apartment in a three-story building next to a gas station. There, he saw two boys from Else's previous marriage running wildly on the couch while his father could not say a word. In Turkey, such behavior from those siblings would have provoked a strong reaction.

His father showed off his many suits, while Bay G thought of his own brother lacking a single proper pair of pants for a wedding. In the Netherlands, his father behaved completely differently than in Turkey, adapting quickly to local norms. Bay G gradually realized that his father even feared the Dutch police: "You cannot behave here as you do in Turkey. The police will ruin you." He smiled internally despite cursing in his mind.

The next day, they went to Mia, Else's sister's, house. Mia, tall, thin, and blonde, and Else, shorter and stockier, smoked and drank coffee constantly. Mia had a daughter Bay G's age at university and a younger son. Mia's family spoke English and loved the Beatles. A few days later, he met another beautiful blonde girl with a motorcycle, who took him to a nightclub in a closed mine, almost as if someone was scheming to distract him.

His father worked in a stylish multi-story store in the Netherlands, similar to Vakko, shortening pants and sleeves on the top floor. When Bay G visited the store, his father greeted him with a loud Anatolian folk tune, even turning on a massive radio he had bought at a flea market. His father said, “Let the infidels learn music,” humorously claiming he taught music to locals in the Netherlands after failing to find work in Turkey.

Later, he told his father he would go to Amsterdam to meet his friend William, and Mia’s daughter, who was also going, would accompany him. Eventually, he understood she was there to see what he would do in Amsterdam. Upon arriving, William showed him around in his Citroën, flouting traffic rules, even driving between a building and its columns at the Opera House.

William’s father, a high-level executive in an oil company, lived in a villa atop a hillless area in the Netherlands. William took him to a party at his father’s villa, met him, and borrowed the yacht keys under the guise of a tour. He tasted apple salad for the first time, which he found very interesting. Bay G once again explained to William the issue of his father not sending child support.

“Easy,” said William. His brother-in-law was a member of the Dutch Supreme Court and would help resolve it. Meanwhile, in Amsterdam, Bay G sold his white sheepskin to hippies in exchange for a few pairs of second-hand jeans.

He met William and the brother-in-law at a bar with Mia’s daughter, who was astonished by the Supreme Court connection. With proper documentation, the court could have immediately deported his father, but Bay G hesitated, wanting his child support money while fearing that his father might obstruct his return to Turkey. Mia’s daughter observed all of this in amazement.

He informed the Supreme Court member he was undecided. Mia’s daughter then called his father in Heerlen, telling him, “Your father wants you on the phone.” His father went ballistic, threatening to burn the house in Turkey if deported. The issue remained unresolved, and Bay G thanked William and his brother-in-law before leaving Amsterdam for Heerlen.

His father was explosive, never considering himself wrong, viewing all events as the misdeeds of his son from Turkey. At that time, his father, despite not having a fear of flying, bought him a plane ticket back to Turkey. Mia revealed that they had actually been very fearful of his coming to the Netherlands, as young people like him had been known to attack or even kill their fathers.

Life is not fair, but remember—
sometimes it is unfair in your favor too.

Peter Ustinov

Mia

In my heart there is an entire city: houses, doors, roads, journeys, sounds, and streets—witnesses to distant memories that feel so close. Thoughts seep through my mind like water finding its way through cracks… Silence within the noise. Restless thoughts, drifting from place to place… In the leading role, my father—who went to the Netherlands as an undocumented worker—and his wandering heart drawn to another woman. Is this what happens when one is uprooted from the heart of Asia? First Konya, Karaman, then Thessaloniki, Ottoman Bursa, and finally the utterly unrelated Netherlands. Even if you have not gone, your relatives have passed through these lands in caravans. Bonds formed with strangers; wars and weddings alike have been lived.

Looking at the stories in my past that bring distant places close, I found myself tied unquestioningly to a single city. I thought I could carry an entire city in my heart and feel at ease. Not at all… If you carry a whole city in your heart, high-pressure stories flow through your veins. Your mind fills with stories begging, "Tell me." People say, "Write this too… and this… and me…" They understand that, amid all that sense of wandering, you are stuck in stories and cannot move on. Without telling anyone the bleeding parts of your own story, you wrap them up quietly—and tend to others' stories as well.

Then one day you realize your father is far away, you are in the city you love, but you are broke. What remains to you and your siblings from your father's Dutch adventure is hardship and struggle. A voice in your head says, "Forget others' stories, take care of your own." Walking down the street, you suddenly think, "I need to go home and write something—something in my mind has started bleeding again."

For instance, I must write about Mia—with a cigarette in her hand; may she rest in peace, the Dutch Mia. They too contributed to the history of migration, having moved from Yugoslavia to the Netherlands during World War II. Their relatives who died under German occupation remained there. All this coincided with the time my mother's family migrated from Thrace to Bursa.

Who was Mia? When I met her in 1974, her husband—a sea captain—had passed away. Mia was Else's older sister. Else was the Dutch woman my father had fallen for. Our concern, however, was money: child support payments that never made their way from the Netherlands to Bursa. We sent official documents from Bursa, but my father spent the money on himself instead of sending what rightfully belonged to us. A man who could bring flowers and alcohol to Dutch birthday parties—but for his children in Turkey, child support was apparently unnecessary…

And that is what suddenly makes you leave behind the great city you carry in your heart—Bursa. Money withheld. At twenty-four, you arrive in the Netherlands to question the fate of

that money, unaware that you will meet Mia, who is in her fifties. Unable to communicate properly with your father or his English-less partner Else, you ask yourself in despair, “Why did I come here? My God, what a strange adventure…”

As I asked these hopeless questions, Mia—cigarette in hand—said to me in English: “Young man, when young Turkish men come here to see their fathers, sometimes strange things happen… you understand—knife, gun…” That’s what she said. As if she wanted to share in my despair. Believe it or not, from that day on, I began to believe that desperate questions summon angels from somewhere. As they say, help comes only when one is truly cornered.

Mia was a refined woman, the widow of a captain. She lived in a beautiful house, with a daughter, a son, and a dog. She spoke of knives and guns—but not blood, perhaps so as not to stain the conversation. We sat at a round table. She was surprised that I knew Beatles songs. On the table was Dutch cheese I liked; I lit a cigarette for my endless melancholy. I had returned from Amsterdam empty-handed after failing to resolve anything with William’s brother-in-law…

Suddenly she said, “Let’s make a deal, young man.” Though I hesitated, Mia proposed that she would take the child support money—hoarded by my father—from her sister Else and deposit it into our bank account. “It is your right,” she said. I was astonished. In my mind, the shattered piano at Aachen station suddenly reassembled itself; the discordant tones vanished, and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No. 1 began to play. Yes, these were the Dutch—people who had once colonized parts of the world—but they could also make such strange, humane agreements.

“This money belongs to you,” she said—defending my rights and those of my siblings. Taking another drag from her cigarette, Mia asked, “This would be good for you, wouldn’t it?” Of course it would. I had barely managed to come to the Netherlands with my shabby suitcase, clinging to distant relatives—what more could I ask?

We shook hands. The Maastricht Treaty—so important for the European Union—had not yet been signed, and yet I was making my own significant agreement nearby. Strangely, history never recorded the Maastricht Agreement between Mia and me…

When I returned, my mother said, “They’ve tricked you,” but the deal had been made. There was no other option. Whatever others might think, the incredible thing was that this agreement held for years. Strangely enough, Mia’s daughter—who once informed my father about my actions—is now my Facebook friend.

Oh time, how strange you are…

From Central Asia to Anatolia to the Netherlands, the spirit of migration has settled upon us all. We take refuge in words and make strange agreements in foreign lands. Trains, platforms, buses, and suitcases flow through our eyes. I return and tell all this to the ancient city in my heart—its doors, roads, sounds, and streets. My wounds begin to heal. Bursa wraps me gently, like a blanket, whispering: “It will all pass… you are grown now… write the stories in your mind—it will do you good.”

I realize we didn't even need to make a deal with her. I buy a yellow typewriter on credit and write all this through tears.

The silence within the noise in my mind turns into letters on the typewriter—sentences telling the story of a strange agreement from my youth…

Appendix:

To clarify the matter, I feel the need to include a letter I wrote to Mia in 2018, shortly before her death:

Dear Mia,

Perhaps in 1974 you were trying to solve your sister Else's problems. Your words, "Young man, let's make a deal," still echo in my ears. With your practicality and ability, at a truly critical—yes, critical is not an exaggeration—moment in my life, when I had no money, you made a very important contribution. Now I am a statistician, and I must admit that your contribution was statistically significant.

Because…

Without the agreement we made about the child support, I might not have had enough money to complete university. I will never forget you as long as I live. This is no exaggeration—you have always been an angel to me. Considering we only knew each other for ten or fifteen days, the importance of your contribution becomes even clearer. I have told this story to many people, but I should have thanked you directly.

Unfortunately, we never met again after 1974. But I always prayed for your health, wealth, and happiness. You will always remain, for me, an angel and a Dutch duchess.

Please accept all these sincere words.

The young man of 1974,

Mr. G.

"Every pain and every storm calms in its own bay.
Time slips through our hands,
piling up behind us,
and hope flutters on the wing of a bird."

Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca

Becoming an Academic

After returning from the Netherlands, Bay G sold the blue jeans he had brought with him. One day, in a friend's house, he noticed a sack filled with women's clothes and asked what they were. His friend explained that his aunt had brought them from Istanbul; some had already been sold by his mother, but the rest remained in the sack with no clear plan. Because the dresses were colorful and floral, they could easily find buyers in villages. His friend mentioned a village where they had relatives who might help sell them. The next day, they went there together and managed to sell all the clothes in the sack. In fact, selling women's clothes in the village turned out to be surprisingly easy. As soon as they arrived, they went to the village coffeehouse; the friend's young relatives took the sack, sold the clothes, and brought back the money. This incident opened the door for Bay G to start selling second-hand clothing.

On another day, he saw a men's suit in the hands of a friend, the son of a former member of parliament, and asked what he intended to do with it. The friend was taking it to the flea market to sell. Bay G offered him more than what he would get there and bought the suit. At that time, construction in Alemdar was still going on at full speed, and many workers from Eastern regions were employed nearby. He sold the suit to one of these workers at a good profit. Soon, other friends began bringing him old clothes they found at home. Before long, one of the rooms in the small house in the garden of their single-story white home was filled with sacks of second-hand clothes. Construction workers from the area would come, pick out suits, trousers, shirts, and sweaters, and buy them.

Just as the second-hand clothing business began to show real promise, it collapsed due to a rather absurd incident. One early morning, two workers from the East knocked on the window as if they were creditors. When Bay G pulled back the curtain, they asked, "Brother, do you have any underwear?" His mother, awakened by the noise, shouted at the workers and chased them away. Then she turned to her son and scolded him: "As if what I've gone through with your father wasn't enough, now this madman has appeared! Take your rags and leave if you want—but you cannot sell old clothes in this house and gather workers at our door at dawn!" Had his mother supported him instead of scolding him, perhaps Bay G's future might have taken a very different course.

Bay G began to evaluate the professions around him. When his mother's family migrated to Bursa during the Second World War, her brother—who had studied at Cerrahpaşa Medical Faculty in Istanbul—later settled in their hometown in Thrace and worked as a government doctor. Another brother worked for the State Railways in Izmir, while the one in Bursa sold ready-made clothing and continued tailoring. His father had also owned a tailor shop before going to the Netherlands, but his mother disliked the idea of running a business. In her view,

a proper job meant working for the state—becoming a civil servant and sitting comfortably in a government office. The private sector was not for her.

As he reflected further, another question emerged: *Was he truly determined enough to pursue the second-hand clothing business?* He could not honestly answer "yes." His mother may have dampened his entrepreneurial spirit, but the truth was, he had also given up too easily. Life had presented him with opportunities—the sack of clothes sold in the village, the suit he bought and resold. Perhaps it was trying to show him there was a market, an opportunity—but he had not pursued it seriously and had abandoned it at the first sign of resistance.

In his final year at the Academy, something similar to what Sencer had once told Asaf Savaş at the Faculty of Economics in Istanbul seemed to apply to him: music could only go so far. Bay G began to think about what he would do in the future. In truth, he had no clear idea of what he wanted or what he could do. During his final year, he attended some classes, and in one of them, a professor—who was also the head of the Academy—explained the model of the famous economist Wassily Leontief.

After class, Bay G noticed a door next to the classroom labeled "Library" and stepped inside. The librarian sitting at the desk didn't even notice him. About ten or fifteen minutes later, he found a journal—unaware that it would change the course of his life. Inside, he discovered an article by the very economist the professor had praised in class. He decided to translate it into Turkish and give it to the professor. At that moment, he had no intention of becoming an academic. He was young, earning money by playing the guitar. Perhaps he simply wanted to demonstrate his English skills—*look what I can do*.

He approached the librarian with the journal, only to hear: "This is the faculty library; you cannot borrow books from here." But he was not one to give up easily. After some persuasion, he managed to take the journal. In those days, before photocopying was common, books and journals were invaluable.

At home, he translated the article into Turkish and brought it to class the following week. After the lecture, he handed it to the professor, who asked, "Did you translate this yourself?" Yes—he had. After all, he knew English from his time at METU. The professor, who was also the Academy's president, took the translation without another word and left. Much later, just before graduation, news came: his translation had been published in the Academy's journal alongside articles by faculty members. It was the first translation he had ever published. He felt immense pride—words were hardly enough to describe his joy. It was as if the world had begun to revolve around him. A dream he had carried since middle school—writing a book—now seemed within reach.

When he translated that article, becoming an academic had never crossed his mind. But seeing it published planted the idea. He graduated from the Academy in 1976. That autumn, he decided to take the exam to become an assistant in economics. He went to apply, only to learn that no positions were available in the economics department. The Academy president who had published his translation had already left to become a columnist at a newspaper in Istanbul.

“So which exam is open?” he asked.

“Statistics,” they replied.

“Then I’ll apply for that,” he said—and did.

After leaving the Academy, he bought a statistics book from a bookstore across the street and began to study. He later took the exam and passed. He thought he had become a statistics assistant—but it wasn’t that simple. During his final year, he had borrowed some poetry books from a friend. At the time, intense political conflicts between right and left factions were raging in the Academy. Right-wing groups had informed the new Academy president that Bay G associated with leftists and should not be admitted. However, a professor he knew from METU, who had completed his doctorate at the Academy, vouched for him. The problem was resolved. He was now an assistant in the statistics–mathematics department. A journal he had found almost by chance in the library had changed his life.

Even after becoming an assistant, he did not take academia too seriously. “I’ll work here and write books in my spare time,” he thought. Yet he still did not know what kind of book he wanted to write. He had dreamed of writing a book since middle school. He needed to have one. The strange thing was that although he had embarked on the path of becoming a scientist, he did not envision his future book as a scientific one.

Life is a dancing dream.

Lailah Gifty Akita

The Endless Dance

The Academy was over; he had graduated and become what was then called an assistant—today, a research assistant—at the very institution he had finished. A friend who started as an assistant on the same day and shared the same room told him they needed to buy a briefcase immediately. Though Bay G didn’t quite understand why, they went together to the Grand Bazaar and bought black combination-lock Bond briefcases. They had fulfilled what seemed to be a requirement of becoming proper bureaucrats.

From then on, every morning Bay G walked into the Academy building with his Bond briefcase, suit, and tie. It felt strange—while climbing the steps at the entrance, even when no one was around, he had the sense that someone was watching him.

For a while, he carried that serious-looking black briefcase even though it was empty. Gradually, he began to wonder why he was carrying an empty case—and what he would say if someone noticed. At just that moment, one day, the clerk responsible for stationery brought him a bundle of yellow mimeograph paper and two pencils. Without hesitation, he placed them inside the case. It was no longer empty. As always, emptiness had somehow been filled. Soon after, a red-bound English statistics book borrowed from the library joined the contents. Then came a Texas Instruments calculator—with a sigma key that could even compute

standard deviation if you entered the numbers. The black Bond briefcase now looked far more impressive. As he climbed the Academy stairs, Bay G carried himself like an important man. The pavilions, nightclubs, casinos, and wedding halls were behind him now; he had begun ascending a different set of stairs in life.

Even he could not quite understand how this path—from a nightclub stage to the statistics–mathematics department—had opened before him. At the time, he didn't think about it much. Instead, he was slowly becoming acquainted with the realities of academic life.

A mathematics professor who came from Eskişehir taught the course, and many first-year students were struggling with it. These students were about to take a final make-or-break exam; failing once more would mean expulsion. Despite the seriousness of the situation, Bay G and his equally inexperienced colleague—both newly appointed assistants—were assigned as proctors.

The exam began under great tension. Early on, a student sitting in the front appeared to place his initialed blank exam paper on the lectern—but in fact slipped it into his jacket and left the room without being noticed. About an hour and a half later, at the end of the exam, he reentered the classroom and placed the same paper—now filled with answers—on the lectern right before their eyes.

They immediately objected and filed a report, noting that the exam paper had been taken outside. During the confrontation, the cheating student pleaded with them to ignore what had happened, but they refused to cover it up.

Later, as Bay G left the building with his Bond briefcase, he suddenly found himself surrounded by a group of fifteen or twenty angry students—friends of the cheater. They were furious that the scheme had been exposed. It seemed almost certain he would be beaten. Just as fists were raised, a voice rang out:

"What's going on there?"

It was the mathematics professor, about to leave for Eskişehir. The fists froze mid-air. He rushed over, pulled Bay G out of the crowd, and saved him. Academic life, it turned out, was not as easy as it seemed—he had narrowly escaped a serious beating.

On New Year's Eve of 1978, he went with a few colleagues to a celebration at a wedding hall where he had once played guitar. Around 10:30 p.m., he saw a girl he knew from the Academy—one class below him—and invited her to dance. She had just returned from England and was wearing a red kimono. They began dancing in 1977, but their dance continued into the first hours of 1978. Considering how they looked into each other's eyes the whole time, perhaps it was love at first sight.

Of course, Bay G had no idea then that he would spend future New Year's Eves with her. Yet he was so affected that he returned briefly to his friends' table and announced that he would soon be engaged.

After the dance, they went to the table of the family friends she had come with. He wrote down her home phone number on a pack of Maltepe cigarettes and called her the next day. They met in a hotel lobby for coffee, dined at Çelik Palas the following day, and soon after he met her parents. It all felt like a dream. Love at first sight must have been something like this. If he had memorized it, he might have recited these lines by Turgut Uyar:

"But in spring, or outside,
beneath the endless sky,
love multiplied by love
is always infinite—
and has no square root…"

That night, it was as if they had multiplied love by love. The girl he had asked to dance was also an Academy graduate, the only child of her family, and her father was a well-known doctor in the city. During the first week of the new year, they grew close rapidly. They walked the streets looking into each other's eyes. Some evenings he dined at her home, and she would drive him back in her father's car. During one of those dinners, he told them about his father—working in the Netherlands, living with a Dutch woman, and having a daughter there.

He later realized that telling them this had been the right decision. A woman who had once been his father's customer during his tailoring days happened to live in the same apartment as the girl's family. Seeing him there, she had asked the doctor:

"Do you know his father lives with a Dutch woman?"

"Yes, we know," the doctor replied.

That issue passed—but another remained. Each time his girlfriend drove him home, the dream would end and a nightmare would begin. His mother refused to approve of the relationship. When he asked why, she gave a single answer:

"They are rich; we cannot match them. Besides, your father isn't even here."

That sentence angered him most of all. "What do you mean he isn't here? He's in the Netherlands!" he would shout. To his mother, he could only be happy if he married a girl from Alemdar. She had opposed his previous relationships too, claiming those girls wouldn't make proper housewives.

But this time was different. Bay G ignored her objections. He did not listen—and in June 1978, he got married.

The real surprise came from his father. Arriving from the Netherlands for the wedding, he left behind the woman and daughter he had been living with there—and instead took his wife (Bay G's mother) and daughter back to the Netherlands after the wedding. Bay G's marriage had unexpectedly benefited his mother. Without hesitation, as if nothing had ever been wrong, she went with her husband—never once thinking he might abandon her there as well.

The endless dance?

It is still going on…

I was so consumed with what I was fighting
that I forgot what I was fighting for.

Peter V. Brett

The Struggle

There is an endless conflict within us. People seem to take a disturbing pleasure in tearing one another apart, never considering that conflict itself is a waste of time. The violence inside them spills out in the ugliest ways, beginning in childhood. Bay G often thought that what children did to animals—and to weaker peers—could only be described as torture. Stone-throwing fights between neighborhoods, blood feuds in the East, and the crime pages of newspapers were always with them. When such incidents evolved into organized, social forms, they became a full-blown nightmare—a fire, a catastrophe. Toward the end of the 1970s, the country entered a period in which people could kill even their own siblings without hesitation simply for holding opposing political views. Neighborhoods, associations, institutions—everything seemed split into two.

During those years, Bay G was working as an assistant at the Academy. In an amphitheater divided by a line of riot police separating two opposing groups, he tried to teach the statistical concept of standard deviation during evening classes. To make matters worse, electricity cuts meant the lectures were sometimes conducted under the dim light of a kerosene lamp. Society had deviated so far from balance that, before learning about standard deviation, people first needed to relearn what balance itself meant.

In that charged environment, even the creak of a bench could trigger an eruption. The two groups, held apart only by a line of police, were constantly on the verge of attacking each other. Everyone was tense; everyone was alert. It was as if fear, blood, and hostility ruled the country. Once trapped in such a cycle, reason seemed to have abandoned it entirely. No one could see that no one would emerge from such a grotesque reckoning as a winner. Neighborhoods, students, associations—even the police—were divided. It was a true eclipse of reason, a real nightmare. It was a time when the joy and brotherhood celebrated in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 were trampled underfoot.

Amid such a period, in 1979 and 1980, Bay G had two children in quick succession—a boy and then a girl. Although he had rented a house, he often stayed with his wife and children at his father-in-law's home, which began to be seen as a problem by relatives. His wife and mother-in-law cared for the children together—almost like twins—so they mostly remained there. Winters passed without issue, but when his own parents came for summer holidays, they would stir things up, repeatedly asking, "Are you living as a kept son-in-law?" and causing tension.

Fortunately, in 1980, after completing his doctorate, Bay G left for military service as a reserve officer—at least escaping this particular conflict for a while.

"Fear cuts deeper than a sword."

George R. R. Martin

The Storm

While married, with two children, and already an associate professor, Bay G encountered a serious problem just as a new semester was about to begin. At first, he found himself constantly watching the clouds, checking the sky to see whether it would rain. He abandoned his work and became preoccupied with the heavens. Then, as happens every autumn, the clouds gathered, the sky darkened, and eventually a violent storm broke out with heavy rain. He had never liked such weather. At first, he did not take it seriously, but he gradually realized that in these conditions he was overwhelmed by an intense fear—so much so that he could not go outside. Soon, the sound of fear itself began to echo in his ears, and as winter approached, he found himself unable to leave the house at all. In such a state, teaching became impossible.

His father-in-law took him to a retired neurologist. After examining him, the doctor prescribed almost a bagful of medications. Yet the more he took them, the worse he felt. In addition to his original anxiety, his arms and hands began to stiffen. He became fixated on rain and lightning; he could not go out, could not travel, feared heights. Even being alone at home turned into a major source of distress. At times, the fear grew so intense that he would sit very close to the television just to feel less alone. Only later would he realize that his fear of flying had also taken root during this illness.

Eventually, at another hospital, an EEG was performed to measure the brain's electrical activity. The doctor there told him it was not a serious condition, instructed him to throw away all the previous medications, and prescribed a single pill. What he had, the doctor explained, was a phobia. The earlier medications had been inappropriate; the muscle contractions were side effects related to the central nervous system.

Indeed, within a short time, Bay G recovered. In the second semester, he returned to teaching and work. Although he tried not to dwell on what he had experienced, the past would sometimes gather its dark clouds again, stirring a perfect storm within him. Gradually—perhaps not entirely consciously—he began to become his own doctor, coping with his distress through writing and by dedicating time to learning new subjects.

As Stephen King put it: "Writers remember everything… especially the hurts. A writer will tell the story of every scar within. The larger ones become novels."

Perhaps the persistent pressure from his parents—who visited every summer from the Netherlands—also played a role in all this. Even before his father returned to Turkey, his mother had opposed his marriage, arguing that the woman he intended to marry came from

a wealthy family and urging him to give it up. He had not listened. In the years that followed, during summer visits, both his mother and father continued this campaign.

His father, in fact, had never told him what to do in life. The only time he remembered both parents confronting him was when he was about to start middle school: “Will you study or not? If not, start working in the tailor’s shop.”

Years later, during his marriage, his mother once went to his father-in-law’s medical office during a summer visit and, in front of patients, shouted that they had taken her son away—trying to start a confrontation.

Fractals are a way of seeing infinity.

Benoît Mandelbrot

Fractal Consommation

A young academic once described how he met Bay G:

When we were first introduced, the conversation somehow turned to fractals. He began telling me about them:

“These are natural phenomena like coastlines or cracks in ice, or even mathematical formulas. They repeat themselves endlessly at every scale. If you measure a coastline with a short ruler, its length appears large; with a longer ruler, it becomes smaller. Have you ever thought of coastlines as repetitions of similar patterns?”

I hadn’t. Nor did I know that such patterns, which seem so natural, are also constructs of the human mind. At first glance, I would never have imagined that this man would be interested in such things. We were sitting in a café in Göztepe, Istanbul, across from Marmara University. The friend who introduced us had left us alone for a while with a professor visiting their faculty for a conference.

As an assistant professor in the Faculty of Communication, I was indeed searching for someone with whom I could conduct a long-form interview—a *nehir söyleşi*—that I could later turn into a book to support my academic promotion. But the introduction hadn’t been arranged for that purpose. My friend had simply said, “He’s a statistics professor, a good man,” and left it at that. This man, with graying hair and appearing to be in his sixties, sipped his tea and continued: “Fractals are like human lives—they resemble one another, yet each is unique. Snowflakes are fractals too.”

The topic had drifted seamlessly from mathematics to life itself. I had only just learned his name—Bay G—but it felt as though he already knew about my interest in biography. My friend had mentioned that he had written many books, including short novels and stories. The way he connected the unfamiliar concept of fractals with human life intrigued me.

Lives that resemble one another, yet are all different…

As usual, I made a quick decision: if he agreed, I would conduct my interview with him. With each passing minute, his thoughtful and detailed answers convinced me that I had found the right person.

He was the son of a tailor, born in 1950 in the country's fourth-largest city. After my questions, he asked about my work. When I mentioned that I had worked as a journalist, he told me he had written economic columns for local newspapers for many years. We had common ground. "As I said—similar lives…" he added.

Then he asked whether I had ever heard of "fractal music." While working on chaos theory, he had composed such music using computer programs. "I used to play solo guitar in my youth," he said, signaling to the waiter for another tea.

After leaving Middle East Technical University in 1971, he had joined a band. They played for a while in a nightclub in Ankara, and later, lured by good money from an organizer, went to Elazığ to perform in a *pavyon*. A venue owner had paid them an astonishing advance at an office in Maltepe, Ankara.

In short, his life was anything but typical for a statistics professor.

"Why Elazığ?" I asked.

"In those years, compensation payments for the land flooded by the Keban Dam were being distributed there," he replied. "We traveled by train. At the station, we loaded our sound equipment onto a horse cart to get into the city. The number of pavilions made it look like a cowboy movie town. The money was good—that's the simple truth."

Then he added: "A *pavyon* is both a fantastical and tragic world. Every night, the same tragedy repeats itself. At the end of the night, the made-up, well-dressed women get drunk and cry; their makeup runs. Everyone knows how the night will end, yet they still live through it together. People come as if to a colorful musical film, but leave in tears, sometimes fighting."

I was captivated. "I don't believe it," I said. "Believe it or not," he replied. "There were two of us from METU in the band. On nights we didn't play, we sat with young engineers—mostly from Ankara—working at the dam. One night, a waiter whispered that the owner wanted us to leave the table because the women couldn't earn *consommation* money with us sitting there."

I was astonished. This modestly dressed man, immersed in mathematics, computers, and statistics, had lived such a colorful life. Quoting Andrea Wulf from *The Invention of Nature*, he said: "Alexander von Humboldt believed that we can only truly understand nature through imagination."

Like Humboldt, he believed everything was interconnected. "Interdisciplinary thinking," he kept repeating.

Chaos, fractals, guitar, *consommation*—how could these possibly belong together? As I hesitated, he smiled: “Our country is the homeland of postmodernism—anything goes,” he said, turning the conversation toward sociology.

He went on to explain the *consommation* system: “The women would get the men drunk while staying sober themselves. Like magicians. Later, we learned their trick from the waiters. They would pretend to drink whiskey with soda, but secretly pour the whiskey from their mouths into empty soda bottles. With the waiters’ help, they would appear to drink all night while remaining sober.”

Strange stories indeed. Stranger still was how, at the age of 21, he had spent all the money he earned there on a girl who claimed she had escaped from a traveling circus.

I had known academic guitarists—but never one who had played in a *pavyon*. Sensing my surprise, he added: “We didn’t always play in pavilions—there were nightclubs, luxury hotels too.” Then, almost jokingly: “In this country, ‘I’ll do any job’ isn’t just a slogan for the unemployed—it applies to university graduates too. Later, I wrote columns, sold second-hand clothes…”

I asked for his phone number. There was so much more to discuss. When our friends returned, we left the café, and he set off for Bursa.

That week, I called him several times and explained my interview project. “Events cast their shadows before they happen,” he said—quoting James Joyce.

Then he hesitated: “What use is it for others to read the details of my life? Besides, the sheer scale of the material—beyond memory and understanding—troubles me.” The usual motivations—guiding the young, sharing experience—did not convince him. If a biography did not entertain, what was its purpose? He doubted whether anything could truly be preserved in a world where everything eventually fades.

“If I threw away everything I’ve written, what would change?” he said. “In an infinite universe, paths cross and we assign meanings far greater than ourselves.” No one I asked was willing to help arrange the interviews. My wife said I was wasting my time.

A week later, I called Bay G again—without much hope. But this time, unexpectedly, he was optimistic: “Alright,” he said, “we can begin when the time is right.”

That evening, I read one of his essays online: *Kumaş Kokusu*.

Fractals… It felt as though life itself was fragmented—broken into pieces. Would I be able to see the hidden order within that disorder, the pattern that only reveals itself to those who look carefully?

We were only at the beginning of the journey.

That night, my wife shouted: “Instead of worrying about someone else’s life, take care of your child! Our daughter has a fever, and you’re talking about buying cough syrup instead of taking her to the doctor!”

It was one of our routine monthly arguments.

A week later, Bay G called. And we began the interview.

“Illegitimate parents exist,
but I don’t believe there are any illegitimate children.”

Rick Warren

Meryem or Mirjam

He had known Meryem since 1974. In 1978, when his father came to her wedding, he had already abandoned Meryem and her mother. Then he took her mother and younger sister to the Netherlands, leaving them behind in Turkey. After that, he never contacted Meryem and her mother, Else, for the rest of his life, and for years, Meryem had been considered nonexistent. Whether he truly acknowledged Bay G. at all was somewhat doubtful… Anyway. Much later, Bay G. watched a film called *Farewell Katya* and realized that such problems weren’t unique to them. In the movie, the captain, played by Kadir İnanır from the Black Sea region, fathers a daughter named Katya during a brief affair in Russia. The girl grows up in Russia without knowing her father, and later comes to Turkey to find him. The film, based on a true story, oddly focused only on Kadir İnanır’s eldest son, Katya, while ignoring his two other Turkish children. That was how his own siblings had behaved, and now he understood them better.

After retiring and returning to Turkey, Bay G. wanted to press his father for information about his sister—he wanted her address or at least a clue. His father refused to answer and claimed that he was trying to provoke a quarrel between him and his mother. Bay G.’s intentions were perfectly clear: Meryem was his sister, and he worried about her situation in the Netherlands. Dark thoughts would cross his mind, making him uneasy.

In the early 2000s, something completely unexpected happened. While on a summer vacation in Bodrum, he received an email: *“I’m your sister.”* After a long time and partly at her husband’s insistence, Meryem had sent this email. She had actually been following him for some time on the website of the university where he worked and knew his email address. She sent the email from Antalya.

Bay G. immediately left Bodrum for Antalya. About 25 or 26 years later, they met for the first time at a hotel called Titanic. The hotel’s name seemed symbolic of their experiences. Meryem was waiting at the hotel entrance. They embraced with longing; both had tears in their eyes. Among the throngs of all-inclusive tourists, they ate a little and then sat down to speak in English. Meryem was married, childless, and worked at a care center for Alzheimer’s patients. That night, Bay G. spoke for three hours with his sister for the first time.

Meryem said, *"I suppose you were happy after Dad returned."* Bay G. tried to explain, as best he could in her language, that her father in Turkey was far from trouble-free. Meryem had repeatedly tried to communicate with her Turkish sister in the Netherlands but, despite living nearby, had been unsuccessful. Because her sister had ignored her, she assumed Bay G. would do the same and had chosen to watch him from afar. Much later, Bay G. learned that the deceased male sibling's wife, through her husband who had moved to America, had effectively closed the Meryem issue. Years ago, the deceased brother's wife had told her husband that she had heard about the father-in-law's daughter in the Netherlands, and she had heard him say, *"This subject will not be discussed in this house again."*

Some time later, Bay G. invited Meryem and her husband, along with all their relatives, to his daughter's wedding at the Maiden's Tower. Meryem and her husband came to Istanbul for the wedding. When Meryem arrived in Turkey, her father was hospitalized in a care home for Alzheimer's patients, and his health was very poor. Bay G. offered to bring her to see him, and Meryem wanted to. Strangely, when she saw him in the late stage of his illness, a spark appeared in his eyes, and he began speaking broken Dutch. No one could tell whether he truly recognized the daughter he had seen until age seven, and then only from afar until retiring in the Netherlands years later. After his father's death, Bay G. never asked Meryem—who had returned to the Netherlands at that time—whether she had felt sad.

"Gravity explains the motions of the planets,
but it cannot explain who sets the planets in motion."

Isaac Newton

The Ring

I debated a lot about whether to tell the stories related to the ring. I know it's difficult for me to explain something that isn't clear in my own mind. But if I take into account that my contradictions are what make me who I am, then I decided to tell it. Until I was about 13 or 14, I was a sleepwalker. One night, they caught me opening the house door in my sleep. Sleepwalking, later phobias, suddenly being unable to fly even though I hadn't had that problem before, the fear of running out of money, etc.—it was clear that something was wrong. Yet no matter what, I never stayed idle; I was always trying to create something.

In 1978, I had a good marriage, and soon two children followed. Every problem somehow found a solution, but the issues between my mother and father never did. Every summer, my parents came from the Netherlands for a vacation, continuing their own quarrels in Turkey and now trying their best to separate me from my wife. Somehow, my mother went to my father-in-law's clinic—my father-in-law was a doctor—and in front of his patients, she shouted, "You took my son from me," while my father constantly tried to provoke me by asking, "Don't you have a woman?" If I had given in even slightly, they surely would have succeeded in involving us in their fights.

During one of their quarrels, my mother came to me and said that she could no longer bear my father and wanted to leave him. We were at the summer house, and my father-in-law and mother-in-law were there too. In front of them, I shouted, “Mom, let’s get this done. I’ll take care of you; if my wife doesn’t want to, she can leave and I’ll still take care of you.” My mother asked for some time to think and went to my uncles.

Once again, I was mistaken. My mother had no intention of leaving my father. This time she used my sister’s school in the Netherlands as an excuse. Back then, even as a grown man with a wife and two children, I couldn’t fully understand my mother. In the past, she couldn’t leave my father because she had nowhere to go and no money. But now, even with a son who could support her, she still couldn’t leave. And when cornered, she would always say, “But he’s your father…”

After they finally returned permanently from the Netherlands, they argued again and stayed apart for 3–4 months. My mother stayed at my uncle’s place. During that time, I didn’t speak to either of them, but eventually I couldn’t resist and intervened. I first went to my father. The house was covered in dust. I told him that a man of his age shouldn’t be living like this, and that my mother was alone upstairs at my uncles’. I asked if it would be a problem if I brought my mother home. He didn’t say no, and perhaps he didn’t even know why they had been fighting.

Then I went to my mother. As soon as I told her what I had discussed with my father, she started preparing her little bag. She was always ready to reconcile. My mother and I got into a taxi and went to our house in Alemdar. I was quite tense because of the residue of years of fights. I expected a new argument to break out at any moment. But the moment we knocked on the door, I realized once again how foolish I was. As soon as my father opened the door, he said he had bought fish, and my mother, even before stepping inside, said, “Let me clean the fish.”
It was as if nothing had happened…

I started laughing, imagining them both wearing t-shirts that said, “We apologize for disturbing the neighborhood.” I immediately chose to throw myself into the street and escape this absurdity. But no matter how much I tried to run, it was useless because I had also become part of this madness, circulating as I tried to solve it over the years. There was no escape. My only refuge was music, phobias, or writing as a therapeutic occupation.

A year or two after getting married, one night while my wife was putting the children to bed, my mother-in-law and I were sitting at opposite ends of a large dining table, talking. My mother-in-law had a cardboard candy box. To search for something, she overturned the box onto the table, spilling buttons, safety pins, and snaps. At the same moment, a thin gold ring shot out of the box, rolling across the table toward me, landing close enough to touch my left hand’s ring finger. I picked it up and put it on.

From across the table, my mother-in-law said, “It’s my mother’s ring; take it, it’s yours.” The ring had a unique design and was clearly very old. I had no idea of its meaning, but from that day on, I wore the ring continuously for forty-one years.

I only learned its significance in 1980, while doing reserve officer service at the General Staff Secretariat. During lunch, as I handed money to the cashier with my left hand, the hand of another officer behind me appeared next to mine. We both had the same ring, we smiled at each other, and that day we ate lunch at the same table.

The friend was the son of a parliament member from Antalya; his sister worked at the State Theater. He told me their family roots were from Konya and that the ring was a Mevlevi ring. Perhaps we met a few more times, but after military service, our connection ended. Over the years, the ring broke several times because of its age, and each time I had it repaired. Everyone close to me, especially my wife, knew how much I cherished it. And forty-one years later, I lost it.

Black mourning, dark fog, even that wouldn't suffice. I had never hesitated to attach meaning to objects and treat them as if they were alive. Even in middle school, I considered a pencil my lucky pencil and cried when it became too small to write. My attachment to an old computer keyboard is probably mentioned in another book of mine. Sometimes I even had a habit of following the same stones in the street. Whether I was as obsessively compulsive as Jack Nicholson in *As Good As It Gets*, I don't know—but I know I wasn't careless in this regard. "How suitable is this perspective for science?" you might ask. I have no ready answer for that.

I am like this.

The sea is nothing but a library of all the tears in history.

Lemony Snicket

Back in the Library

One day, while passing by the library, Mr. G, thinking about the attention-seeking aspiring writers in *The Mystery of Henry Pick* who kept asking, "What do you think of my novel?" and the "Library of Drafts Rejected," suddenly found himself inside again before he even realized it. This time, next to the librarian, there was a woman about his own age. Mr. G approached their table, thinking they would make small talk about this and that. Both of them smiled at him.

Just to start a conversation, he said, "You know Borges' quote, 'I have always imagined Paradise as a kind of library.' You are very lucky," and asked the librarian, "May I know your name?" In a deep, resonant voice he thought he recognized, he immediately heard the reply: "Zuhur."

He had never heard such a name before, but without revealing his surprise, he remembered J.D. Salinger's advice and responded, "Nice to meet you, how are you?" Before Zuhur could say anything, the woman librarian introduced herself: "I'm Feris." Mr. G replied, "Nice to meet you," though somehow the name reminded him of Zuhurat Baba, whose tomb is in Bakırköy. During the conquest of Istanbul, Zuhurat Baba had appeared suddenly to give water to the soldiers. As for Feris, he had no idea.

Mr. G – I'm glad you remember me. We spoke before, though it's been quite a while…

Zuhur – I didn't remember you coming before, but I know you. I even showed one of your photos from the Internet to Feris. She recognizes you too.

Mr. G – I don't understand?

Zuhur – It's normal you don't. Here's what happened: Someone we assumed was your friend, who often comes to the library, left the drafts of your novel *My Mother, My Father, and I* on one of the tables. Or rather, they forgot them. We waited to return them, but that person never came back. Perhaps it was a little improper, but we read what you had written. Later, Feris found your photos online and showed them to me.

Mr. G – So those are the drafts my friend said, "I can't remember where I lost them." Oh no, don't worry about it, that's what writing is for—so someone reads it eventually.

Zuhur hadn't remembered him coming before. She probably only saw him in the library that resembled a black hole. Besides, the librarian she had known before had been very different.

Zuhur – I understand, you're not like J.D. Salinger. When Feris read them, she said, "Maybe he won't publish these…"

Mr. G – What does Feris mean?

Zuhur – Feris has many meanings, but two are "wounded" and "slain." Feris thinks all women are wounded.

Feris – Why don't you mention the elegant, graceful meaning of my name? Women aren't always wounded or slain…

Zuhur – Of course the word "Feris" has that meaning too, but for me, "wounded" is more beautiful.

Feris – You men want all women to be wounded anyway.

Mr. G – Wounded then… The elegant, graceful meaning of your name is also lovely. I wish "wounded" and "slain" weren't ever used for women…

Feris – Thank you.

Zuhur – We know what you've written, and so does Feris. She was actually the most curious. She asked if you would come here, and I said maybe. You've gained quite a bit of weight. I guess we saw your old photos on social media.

Mr. G – A little investigation about me…

Feris – You're right, we looked at what you've done. We read the drafts your friend left behind. The mother in your book, like my name, is "wounded." You should defend her more. I'm afraid by the end, you'll examine why she was so dependent on her husband. Do you think love is addiction? It seems you're judging them both; what fault is it of your mother's?

Mr. G – Her fault is loving my father too much. That's right, it was a kind of dependency. At one point, I thought a lot about the difference between loving and being dependent. Love isn't pathological like addiction. If conditions turn unfavorable, you can let go of someone you love. But in dependency, that's not the case. If you're dependent on someone, you can never leave them. I guess we're all dependent on something—people, alcohol, writing, gambling, collecting, hunting—so many possibilities. Constantly buying detective novels, collecting them, and opening a shop just to sell them—that's not love; that's more about dependency.

Feris – A different perspective. Zuhur and I are probably book addicts too…

Zuhur – Your father may have spoiled you with his own parents, but I'd say it was your mother who really indulged him.

Mr. G – Yes, when my father was a child and went out with his mother, if he said he wouldn't enter a house, they would return home without going in. He always got what he wanted. I can't measure it exactly, but he was definitely spoiled.

Feris – So, is it a crime for a woman to love her husband to death?

Zuhur – Did she spoil him by loving him so much? That's really absurd.

Mr. G – The age difference mattered, and my father always acted irresponsibly. My mother, however, never opposed him, no matter what he did. She would shout at him to herself or talk to us, but she never did anything against him. He had her captive, almost like Stockholm syndrome…

Zuhur – Their marriage was perhaps wrong; your father must have been blamed for every single mistake.

Feris – A single mistake? The man didn't leave anything undone, and you speak of a single mistake. Loading a cart with a few belongings and leaving the house, then your father holding the landlord accountable… That's unbelievable.

Mr. G – Not a single mistake, of course. My father made many mistakes. One of their shared mistakes was constantly breaking up and reconciling. That was probably what drove me mad.

Zuhur – They're both guilty, actually.

Mr. G – You're right. My mother was involved too, and maybe not in the separations, but in the reconciliations she was at fault.

Feris – Why is reconciliation a fault? A woman loves her husband, and she loves him very much.

Mr. G – My mother always chose to reconcile because she had no parental home to return to if she left my father. Perhaps she was justified. Can you believe, when I got married in 1978, my father came from Holland to the wedding? He had an Opel. We saw him arrive, opened the door, and he had a suit in a case. Being a tailor, I assumed he knew my size and brought me a groom's suit. He came in and said he would wear it at the wedding. You know, usually fathers arrange the wedding, not sons. I never thought to ask him for money, and borrowed a large sum from a friend. That money was important that day. I never trusted my father. Years later, when he returned from retirement abroad, I asked him for a loan to buy land in Bodrum. He shouted, "You pig, you're lacking!" and refused. I said, "I'll ask my mother," and he replied, "Even if you do, she won't give you."

Even stranger, after the wedding, he took my mother and my sister in Turkey to Holland. We didn't expect him to do that at all. When he arrived, we didn't fully understand what had happened, but apparently, he left the daughter, Meryem, with the woman he lived with in Holland. After the wedding, he took my mother and sister to Holland. It seemed his true occupation was abandonment.

Feris – Zuhur and I also discussed whether what we read was real, and we were truly surprised. Apparently, these events are true. Your father bought you a mandolin and an electric guitar, I was going to say let's not criticize that so harshly, but leaving his daughter in Holland really struck me. No matter how much he cheated, your mother's door was always open to him. Perhaps we should consider your mother within her circumstances.

Zuhur – Why are you saying that to me? I have no difficulty understanding women's circumstances. But admit it, women are often extremely tolerant toward men and their husbands.

Mr. G – My father left Meryem in Holland at 7 or 8 with her mother. Legally, she was registered under her mother there.

Feris – Your mother must have really loved your father to go with him to Holland, trusting him. Imagine the trust—how could she know he wouldn't abandon her there again? She was a brave woman. The bottom line: every woman ends up wounded, that's what we understand… There's meaning in my name.

Mr. G – Yes, you're absolutely right.

Zuhur – Perhaps your father took care of Meryem later…

Mr. G – Never. He never cared. He never once tried to connect with them again. Even when Else, the woman he lived with, said, "You can cut ties with me, but this is your daughter," he never contacted them. Meryem told me this herself. After my parents returned permanently from Holland, I pressed my father repeatedly to give me Meryem's address, but he never did. Maybe I share some fault here too—I didn't even know Meryem's last name. My father had told me back in 1974, when I went to Holland, that she was registered under her mother, but I couldn't remember their surname.

Feris – You must have been very young in 1974…

Mr. G – I was 24.

Feris – Very young. It's normal you couldn't think about these details at that age.

Mr. G – Many years later, my real half-sister married another Turk in Holland. When they came to Turkey for summer vacations, I asked about Meryem and her address, but I got no answer. Much later I realized that she was being ignored. My brother in Istanbul, who married young and died early, had also ignored Meryem. Years later, my wife heard this from his spouse.

Zuhur – So they too ignored her, apparently.

Feris – Yes, they ignored her.

Mr. G – At first, I didn't find them justified, but now so much time has passed. Perhaps they were right in their own way. In any case, no one helped me find Meryem. Even if I had found her, I wouldn't have known how to help her in Holland, but I always tried. I always considered her my half-sister. That bond of kinship seems to have grown stronger because my father abandoned them. For years, I kept thinking I must find that girl. I once read that among readers or viewers of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, an unparalleled sense of siblinghood is created. If a novel or a film can create such a feeling, then my feelings of kinship must be even more real.

Feris – It's as if the sentences were written about Zuhur and me; we both love that novel very much.

Mr. G – Did you know Carson McCullers left home to study piano? To me, that loneliness, that inner turmoil, was the language of the town.

Zuhur – You seem to be an expert on this topic…

Mr. G – Well, that her husband was the first soldier injured at the Normandy landing and later committed suicide in 1953…

Feris – And a real expert at that…

Mr. G – No, I might actually be an expert in inner turmoil. I write because I'm restless. In *Tutunamayanlar*, Oğuz Atay beautifully describes boredom when he writes, "Boredom was Selim's major problem."

Feris (laughing) – You did all this, wrote all this, and even made money because you were bored…

Mr. G – You're right. Oddly enough, in high school, in the band we admired, they picked me as the solo guitarist instead of a friend who could read music. They said, "He practices better, has a good ear, he plays what he hears." Let's pause a bit here. I want to emphasize that, despite

always saying “education is important,” we valued improvisation and learning on the job more. I have a thesis: in this country, self-taught always wins against the formally educated. To those who say, “That’s in the past, sir,” I reply, “Look, hasn’t the importance of the self-taught increased even more today?” When I say this, I think of Quentin Tarantino, who said, “When people ask if I went to film school, I tell them, ‘No, I went to the movies.’”

Usually, a dancer or cabaret singer who comes on stage has no sheet music. They just play along with the rhythm, and the important thing is that the melody matches the movement of the hips with the drums. In the end, the friend who could read notes was left aside; we earned our living by ear. Maybe it’s because I left an important school, I’ve always been interested in Bill Gates and Steve Jobs dropping out. Were they formally educated or self-taught? That’s not an easy question. Perhaps university wasn’t enough for them… My mind always sided with the self-taught. I think the fact that half the universities in the world are now corporate universities even supports me. School does not guarantee income.

Zuhur – Earning money has always been important to you.

Mr. G – Yes, it’s true that I’ve had an increasing fear of being broke throughout my life. Once, at a bank where my former students worked, when I began explaining I had no money, a young man peeked from behind the computer screen and said, “Sir, I can see your balance on the screen. Let’s call the others and beat you up; then you’ll know if you have money.” The young man was right, but so was I. I told him, “Son, if I believed I’d recover from being beaten, I’d even pay extra to be hit. But if tomorrow morning I wake up feeling like I have no money again, then all I’ll have is the beating I received.”

Feris – I’ve also watched interviews with you online—you don’t even fly, and can’t…

Mr. G – Yes, I have serious phobias.

Zuhur – Have you considered therapy or seeking help?

Mr. G – Some suggested it, but I didn’t. I’ve always drifted away from science—remember the ring situation. I didn’t really believe a doctor talking to me could fix me. I’m not saying I was right. They suggested hypnosis for my fear of flying; I didn’t try that either. Maybe I feared further disrupting mechanisms in my brain that I didn’t understand… I just said, “I’ve always been like this,” and moved on.

Feris – You wrote Zuhur as a bow-tie wearing, tuxedo-clad, wire-framed glasses librarian in a black-hole-like library…

Zuhur (laughing) – But look, I don’t wear glasses…

Feris – And you don’t like bow ties either. We also never understood the girl you described, trying to keep the old people away when you entered and left that library.

Mr. G – I don’t know, I really don’t know. Yes, the man’s outfit was different, he wore glasses, but he resembled Zuhur. Come on, don’t expect me to suddenly recall all my memories for

you. I must have had a dream, a strange dream. What's odd, I think, is that the librarian I saw in that black-hole-like library seemed to me like Zuhur. Just kidding, of course.

Feris – Really strange. Will you publish what you've written? Will we see this as a book, on our shelves?

Mr. G – That question has been on my mind a lot too. I've realized that over time I can meet my parents, especially my father, with more understanding. I even dedicated a textbook I co-authored with a friend to my father. Let me ask you—if I publish the book, would they be upset?

Zuhur – I don't think so. Why would they be?

Feris – I don't think it's that simple. Neither of them is in this world. Let's think or ask it this way: Could it be that you wrote this book to take revenge on them, especially for what your father made you go through?

Mr. G – No, I don't think "revenge" is the right word, though it's true that what happened hurt me deeply.

Feris – A reckoning…

Mr. G – Yes, maybe a kind of reckoning. And in that reckoning, I've always thought I should acknowledge my own mistakes too.

Zuhur – Did you?

Mr. G – Yes. For example, in an interview, I was asked how many siblings we were. I answered without counting Meryem at all. So clearly, acceptance isn't easy. That's why I understand my siblings who didn't accept Meryem. I never resent them, but I would have liked them to understand me too. I believe Meryem also suffered injustice. If I could, I would even establish an association to help all the children my parents left behind. During the Bosnian War, I wanted to adopt a small child who had lost both parents. My wife respected my wish, but then we gave up because we couldn't guarantee he would get along with our children at home.

Feris – Perhaps a strange comparison, but it's like you're talking about your mother and father on a TV program, but they can't join the program. Whether good or bad, you speak for them. In short, in these circumstances they have no right to reply—they're no longer in this world. Then perhaps you shouldn't publish the book.

Mr. G – True. There's another aspect too. I always think of the film *Everything for Sale*. Revisiting the past, reconstructing it, is a very difficult task. At the end of the film, we see horses running in a lush green meadow. When Andrej Wajda realized he couldn't handle it, he let the horses loose to run in the meadow. After the dead, there's not much we can do.

Feris – But does writing this novel ease your inner pain, at least give you some benefit…

Mr. G – I don't think so. If anything, sometimes it may have even increased it.

Zuhur – You're obsessive about this.

Feris – Zuhur is right.

Mr. G – Since you're a librarian, perhaps you can understand me more easily. Writing is the best way for me to relieve the distress inside me.

Zuhur – The inner turmoil like in Oğuz Atay…

Mr. G – Yes, inner turmoil. When I was a child and told my mother I was bored, she would say, "Shall I open a little window for you so you can look out? Maybe your boredom will pass." That window perhaps opened through writing. It was a window through which I could access all the writings of the world. Books are distant from conflict; they are always read with an inner voice. But even while writing, I have problems—constantly checking how many words a text has, counting how many times certain words are repeated. The word "library" appears a lot in the text. Sometimes I even considered naming the novel *My Mother, My Father, the Library, and Me*.

Zuhur – You must be joking. As I read what you wrote, I kept asking myself whether all of this is real. What do you say to that?

Mr. G – Most of it is true. But I didn't want the book to be a complete biography. Also, perhaps it would have been better if someone else, more objective, wrote the biography.

Feris – You're going to get up and leave soon, I suppose.

Mr. G – Yes, I have some work to do. But I'll leave what I've written anyway. Eventually, I will also need a "Library of Rejected Drafts"… I think I solved that once. A bookstore wanted to publish my well-selling statistics books. I told them, "Publish Florentine Carlo and I'll give you my statistics books." They said they'd pay a transfer fee and didn't take my offer seriously. But later, they realized how serious I was. To me, even if the publisher gains indirectly from this, the editors' opinions are not that important. Editors can change their minds very easily. For books they try to send to the "Library of Rejected Drafts," it's not hard to see the praise arranged for them. The conditions of the market have always dictated literature and art—maybe I'm going too far saying that.

Recently, a foreign newspaper published an article about the 2020 Booker Prize winner. It spoke of Douglas Stuart's first novel, *Shuggie Bain*, which depicts his impoverished, addicted childhood in Glasgow and took him ten years to write. The article also mentioned that before the book was published, 30 editors rejected it. Stephen King's *Carrie* was also rejected 30 times.

One, two, three—not just a few, but 30 editors rejected the book…

Then the book won a major award, and all 30 editors presumably continued their work. This example is really interesting. Fortunately, the award committee evaluating the book managed to break the editors' curse. Every author naturally asks: what role do editors, who cannot distinguish a quality novel from a poor one, have in the market? The truth is, an editor's job is to select books that will earn good money for their publisher. Yet they failed to recognize the value of an award-winning book. Who knows how many opportunities the publishers missed because of them.

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*—21 rejections…

James Joyce's *Dubliners*—18 rejections.

In short, there is no famous author who hasn't suffered the editors' curse.

Anyway, I won't go on. Goodbye, see you soon.

Good writing is remembering the details.
Most people want to forget.
Don't forget the things that hurt, embarrass, or seem foolish;
turn them into a story that tells the truth."

Paula Danziger

Writing

"Words are loaded pistols," Sartre used to say. One day, when his children were fighting and refused to sit quietly despite his instructions, he threatened in a column he was writing at the time to describe their quarrel, and that managed to end it. He was aware of the power of words, but it was only much later that he realized their healing, distracting, and therapeutic potential.

As Italo Calvino said, no language is without deceit, and he too would deceive himself with writing. He began to concoct a strange ointment from letters and words to apply to the wounds opened by his fears. Almost every morning, when he got out of bed, the fear of being penniless, the fear of heights, and perhaps even the underlying fear of death that doctors mentioned, seemed to diminish and melt among the words he circulated in his mind for writing. He created a false paradise out of writing, deceiving himself with it. Back when he was still an assistant professor, he entered an essay contest on the social responsibility of advertising with a piece titled 'The Social Responsibility of the Magicians of Kayseri' and even won second prize. Writing was beginning to become his own. If you had asked him in middle or high school, he would have wanted at least one book; now, it seemed that this path was slowly opening before him.

A friend, playing with the titles of books and poems he had written, told him: 'In Florentine Carlo's Needlework Tailors, when encountering Mr. Fomora, the topic of 'the south wind building a city from scraps' was discussed in a Rhapsody of Syringa. Perhaps on the other side

of the border, we were waiting not for a statistics professor who explains the world in black and white, but for the bohemian musician and poet of our imagination. If he is delayed in coming, we would cross the border ourselves to find him. But there is still time; at least I keep waiting.

Writing and music were Bay G's greatest loves. He had dropped out of METU and lost four years, initially experiencing times of financial hardship. For him, the real trauma was probably being penniless. This fear had seeped into his very bones, transforming into a strange creature in his mind that seemed destined to stay with him for life. When asked, Bay G would say, 'On an empty stomach, neither music nor poetry can be enjoyed. Can one write? I even worry about that.' Perhaps chasing money and work gave him an excuse to betray writing and music. He was well aware that he wasn't particularly brave.

He had never dreamed of being a writer at six like George Orwell. In Orwell's essay 'Why I Write,' he says, 'pure egoism, the desire to appear clever to others and talk about oneself, the wish to be remembered and spoken of after death.' If the same question were asked to Bay G, probably the desire to earn money and appear clever would come first.

His engagement with writing had begun later. Somehow, in middle school, perhaps with some encouragement from his Turkish teacher, he started to take an interest in writing. He remembered writing a few small pieces back then, and how the teacher was surprised and asked, 'Did you write these?'

He believed that to write, one's antennas must be as open as possible. Writing was, in part, an effort to make sense of what is happening. Open antennas and a supportive environment provided at least a favorable setting to begin writing. His surroundings, especially his mother, did not support writing. He never thought his father was interested in his writing. In short, he received little support from his family. His mother, while he was trying to write something on his own in middle school, would say, 'Study your lessons, don't write nonsense,' always attempting to block him. During his marriage, it was also clear that his attempts at writing were not met with praise.

Why did he write?
He wrote because he was in pain when he didn't, because it was the only way to let what circulated in his mind flow out. Couldn't talking have been a way? He didn't know. It was clear he loved talking too, but writing was different. Perhaps writing was like talking to himself. Van Gogh claimed he painted because he could not think while painting; maybe he wrote because writing offered moments when his mind was free from unease.

Irish writer James Joyce described the purpose of writing as 'to hammer the yet-uncreated consciousness of my race in the forge of my soul.' For J.D. Salinger, who died in 2010, anger and the desire to tell someone something were important reasons to write. Eventually, he would 'write for the sake of writing,' isolating himself from society to meditate, seeing no need to publish. The author who had fought in World War II told his sister, 'No matter how long you live, you can never fully get the smell of burnt meat out of your nose.' Even the man who killed John Lennon carried a copy of *The Catcher in the Rye*.

When asked, 'Why do you write so much?' he would reply, 'Because I'm bored.' Colin, a New Zealand professor who had also taught at the Open University for a semester, suffered from the same issue. Having traveled the world repeatedly for work, Colin gave the same answer. This gave him hope—there were other people with the same struggle.

Orhan Pamuk said, 'For me, being a writer means discovering the hidden second person within oneself, the world that shapes that person, through years of patient effort. Writing does not immediately bring novels, poetry, or literary tradition to mind; it is a person who closes himself in a room, sits at a desk, and turns inward, creating a new world with words.' For such a person, writing is a safe harbor. There, the writer faces all of his own troubles alone, away from the storms and anxieties outside. Here, words cannot harm you; you cannot run out of money; no one can yell at you—or if they do, they must use your words.

D. H. Lawrence's father was a poorly educated, heavy-drinking coal miner; his mother, unhappy and middle-class. Their disharmony harmed their children. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, often cited as a prime example of Freud's Oedipus complex theory, perhaps arose from these tensions. Bay G gradually understood how children from unhappy families often feel compelled to create something, and the results can vary. The output need not always be textual; Steve Jobs and Elon Musk were among those shaped by household unrest.

One sleepless midnight, he watched an interview on Bloomberg TV where Charlie Rose spoke with British playwright David Hare. Hare described his book *The Blue Touch Paper – Fitil* as 'a novelistic biography.' In a letter to David, his friend Wallace Shawn remarked, 'They warn you life is short, but not that it is simultaneous.' The driving force behind biography, then, is this simultaneity—the fact of living alongside others, intentionally or not, which can lead us to remember some with affection or inadvertently hurt others. Though David came from a lower-middle-class family, he attended an elite school on a scholarship and went to Cambridge. He, too, had grown up in a shantytown in Bursa. Enthusiastically learning guitar, singing in English, and buying shrimp with his first paycheck, he engaged in pursuits unrelated to his neighborhood. As his mother put it, 'his butt in straw, heart in Egypt.'

At such moments, Bay G's thoughts always turned to 'speaking after the dead,' which disturbed him. Though he constantly questioned the need to dwell on the past, he couldn't help speaking and writing. Revisiting someone's life was difficult; naturally, engaging with the past had its own pains.

While you try to narrate your life, others could become caught in a kind of 'technical surveillance' through your writings. As one of Dostoevsky's characters remarked, your paths intersect in the infinite. When the paths of two or more people cross in limitless infinity, we can derive great meanings, regardless of stature or size.

How strange it was. He had never been to England, had never had a single English friend—except for David, who stayed briefly at their house—but he started music with the Beatles and loved their songs. John Lennon, too, had his troubles. Now, he was referencing an English playwright in his book. Perhaps there were similarities with David Hare. Writing, as a desire for attention, seemed shaped in David by his sailor father's neglect; he also had unresolved issues with his parents.

Orhan Pamuk wrote in *My Father's Suitcase*: 'Moreover, my father had not been the oppressive center of my life; he let me be free. All this should remind us that writing and literature are deeply tied to a lack at the center of our lives, and to our feelings of happiness and guilt.' James Joyce, following his deceased mother's wishes, had refused to kneel and pray at the foot of his bed, feeling immense guilt, which he recounted in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.*

In *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life,* South African writer J. M. Coetzee, winner of the 2003 Nodel Literary Prize, wrote: 'All autobiographies tell a story; all writings are autobiographical.' Bay G had noted this. J. Hillis Miller also said, 'All literature tells time.' For him, literature narrated both time and our fears. Belarusian Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich asked, 'How many novels disappear without leaving a trace?'—a notion echoing the idea that everyone's life is a novel. For some reason, ego constantly reminded you that the most interesting, unfortunate, or tragic events happened to you.

One day, a student Bay G met after class mentioned he had been in prison for murder and attended class from an open prison. At that moment, a spark lit in his mind: every life tells something, though some lives are profoundly different. For moments like these, Svetlana Alexievich said, 'I wish I could forget what I hear and return to a period of ignorance.' As for Russian writers, 'Why do you always tell tragedy?' she asked herself, answering: 'Because that's how we live.'

The existence of libraries
is the best evidence that
we still have hope for the future of humanity.

T.S. Eliot

The Library for the Last Time

That morning, at the Buenos Aires Library, Bay G read Jorge Luis Borges' story *The Library of Babel*. Borges, who had worked at the library for nine years and said that being a writer was not a choice but fate, described a universe composed of enormous adjoining hexagonal rooms. Each of these rooms had bookshelves along all four walls. Though the arrangement of the books was random and meaningless, the library contained infinite knowledge. Despite this abundance of information, the books were entirely useless to the reader, and the lack of a proper ordering of this extraordinary content left the librarians in a desperate, almost suicidal frustration. Anyone wanting to see a virtual version of the Library of Babel could visit "libraryofbabel.info."

Borges was not happy during his nine years working at the library, because those he worked with were more interested in horse racing and women than in literature. According to Borges, there seemed to be an unwritten rule in libraries that mandated as little actual work as possible. Over time, the archiving of books, even if moved from a physical to a virtual environment, retained the meaning of the word "archive" as "the place it started." At this point, the word was also linked with "founding act" and "authority." Borges could not fathom

that people working in such an important role would be more interested in horse racing than in literature.

Today, he thought, he should go and talk about this with Zuhur and Feris. Until now, he had always shared what he wrote with them by email and had missed them. He was curious to know what they thought of his writing. Bay G spent a few days in this indecision. Then, somehow, he decided to go to the library. On the way, he bought cold sandwiches and freshly baked simit to share with them. Entering, he said, “Look what I brought you, let’s spend our lunch break chatting.” Both greeted him warmly.

Feris: Well, it’s good you came…

Zuhur: We recently discussed what you wrote with Feris. We were hoping you’d come so we could talk…

Bay G: Here I am. First, let’s open these. There’ll be tea, right?

Zuhur: Of course. What could be easier than tea? I feel like you’re a bit more relaxed than before.

Bay G: I don’t know… maybe because I’m nearing the end of the novel? I’m approaching thirty-two thousand words, maybe that’s why.

Feris: How many words will it be in total?

Bay G: Around forty thousand words and about 200 pages, I think. Not fixed, though; it could be longer or shorter. But very long novels aren’t really suitable today. Young people write “mrb” instead of “merhaba.” Sometimes I wonder what it would be like to write a puzzle-like novel full of such shortened words.

Zuhur: I’ve always been interested in how much what’s written reflects reality.

Bay G: People seem really tired now; they’ve started preferring lies. Or at least, that’s how it seems to me.

Feris: You mean post-truth…

Bay G: Yes, people want to hear their own voices echoed, to be with others in “echo chambers” where voices similar to theirs resonate. Truth isn’t that important to them. They don’t even want to think about rooms where their voices aren’t echoed; they ignore them. Social media now acts like “fanning the flames” for societies divided and hostile to each other. At first, everyone thought social media would be a space where everyone could express their thoughts and gain respect, but everything developed in the opposite direction. Social media now functions to polarize.

Feris: You’re right. I’m also surprised at women taking photos with phone filters. Everyone wants to appear differently. Nobody cares whether the photo is real. Nobody cares about that.

Zuhur: Maybe we're just getting old…

Bay G: No, you're still younger than me. It's more about questioning things or not. They used to say, "I fear the snake not as much as I fear lies," now maybe they say, "I fear lies not as much as I fear the snake." I don't remember a time when lies were so widespread and dominant. Historians should be asked. Lies were partly produced by technology. Social media gives people mirrors, like the ones at fairs in towns. The difference is that these mirrors don't make people giants or dwarves—they beautify them. Even if lies, people want to look beautiful.

Feris: I guess that existed in every age, but technology wasn't available. Your writings about fashion came to mind.

Bay G: Yes, a Frenchman named Charles Frederick Worth founded a fashion house in Paris and, in the mid-18th century, began advising clients on how to look better depending on what they wore. He must have felt the need for such work. In the 20th century, the industry grew tremendously.

Feris: Your parents were tailors too…

Bay G: My mother mostly helped my father. At one point, they even hired a young girl as an apprentice, so two women worked in the shop. My father was a talented tailor, but he didn't love the work. Tailoring was a job requiring patience and handwork back then. Fitting a coat to every hunchback wasn't easy. The fashion industry in the 1960s–70s was just starting to spread in the country.

Feris: So people still wanted to look beautiful back then.

Bay G: People have always wanted to shine, to look different from others. In ancient Rome, women tried to beautify themselves with creams made from gladiators' sweat.

Feris: I had no idea. I'm a bit distant from these topics.

Zuhur: It's good for your health and finances to stay distant. Let's focus on the novel.

Bay G (laughing): I understand, you're saying this novel will end up in the "Rejected Drafts Library." I looked at the door; the library's name hasn't changed, or maybe I missed it.

Zuhur: Don't be too hard on yourself.

Feris: Yes, there are places I like.

Bay G: About 10% maybe?

Feris: Zuhur's right, don't be too hard on yourself, I'd say too.

Zuhur: I want to look at this from another angle. Didn't your parents have good qualities? Did you give them enough space in the novel? Your father arranged mandolin lessons for you from a student at the nearby Teacher's Institute, then brought an electric guitar from the Netherlands. You mention all this.

Bay G: Yes, that's true. They had other good qualities too. For example, in old age, they spent their money without borrowing from me. I've seen friends whose parents did that. They didn't want to burden me with their problems. Even when both had Alzheimer's, they told me, "Go home, take care of your children and family." After every problem, my mother's excuse, "But he's your father…" now seems more realistic. How complex this is. My mother was right; she'd been saying it for years. She hid her love for my father behind this wall. She never explicitly said, "No matter what, I love your father, and I'll love him anyway." Seen this way, my father appeared more as he was. Sometimes I wonder: is the end of a long, childhood-confusing fight really this? Both didn't love me because their marriage went wrong. Also, they had heard somewhere that children should be treated distantly. Since those who brought me into the world didn't love me, nothing was ever enough; I felt frustrated and struggled with phobias all my life. As I grew, I dealt with other things. Like Toni Morrison said, there was a book I wanted to read, one that hadn't been written yet, and I wanted to write it.

Feris: The opening quote…

Bay G: Yes. I think I was honest about whether I blamed my failure at METU on my father. I don't want to side with lies.

Zuhur: So post-truth isn't really your thing, apparently.

Bay G: Whatever the case, this is a text, and it's impossible for it to fully contradict reality. Everyone has the right to interpret it differently.

Feris: Zuhur and I both focused on different aspects of this text. We also have different ideas about how the book cover should look.

Zuhur: I suppose I'm more pessimistic and imagine a darker cover.

Feris: I don't see it that way at all. I imagine a brighter, more open cover. Let's see who turns out to be right in the end.

Bay G: If the book isn't published, neither of you will be right.

Zuhur: It's not just about the cover; there are other differences between us. Feris loved your mother; I focused on the school-trained vs. self-taught distinction in the book. There are other things I'm interested in, but that topic drew me the most.

Feris: We've discussed this before. The novel favors the self-taught, but it probably doesn't aim to address changes in the concept of school today.

Bay G: Right, that topic belongs to a slightly different, more technology-oriented text or

narrative. I'm not sure how well I can explain, but to me, school aligns more with theory, while self-taught or hands-on learning aligns more with data, learning through doing. In the past, gathering data wasn't as easy as it is now. Well, now it's only easy for big data companies… In the past, theory was more important than data in science; today, data takes precedence over theory. Alongside learning at school or under a master, now there's also learning from the Internet. In the past, those who couldn't attend school had to learn from a master. Today, even those with access to school also learn online. In a sense, being forced to be self-taught in the past is now supported by technology.

Zuhur: I'm not very familiar with these topics

Feris: It's a bit like philosophy of science. In a course I took, we learned from Karl Popper's book that the rejection and acceptance of hypotheses are not symmetrical. This is also discussed in Nassim Nicholas Taleb's *Black Swan*.

Bay G: Yes, these are topics close to the philosophy of science. I once watched an Oprah Winfrey interview. She said that after twenty-five years of interviewing many celebrities, no matter how famous they were, all of them asked her, "How was I? Was I good?" Even such famous people needed approval, reassurance, and praise. No matter how famous they are, they need love. In the film *The Mystery of Henry Pick*, aspiring writers constantly ask, "What do you think of my novel?" Someone even establishes a "Rejected Drafts Library" for them. Novels rejected by the market can find a safe harbor this way.

Feris: I think your writing can be summarized with the words "hunger for love." Everyone in the book seems to want to be loved: your mother, you, Maryam, the writers. Writers join this caravan too; no matter how much they are rejected, they never give up knocking on editors' doors. Celebrities in Oprah Winfrey's interviews, John Lennon, almost everyone wants to be loved.

Zuhur: A lot of effort clearly went into the chapter-opening quotes. You probably also thought about music. If a piece of music is mentioned on a page, you probably want that page read while listening to that music.

Bay G: I worked hard to make it a good book. You can't force the reader for anything. But as you said, if read that way, it will be wonderful.

One lives in the hope of becoming a memory.

Antonia Porchia

Life is not the opposite of death, but a part of it.

Haruki Murakami

Remembering

Winter had arrived. “Some things become such a part of us that we forget them,” said an Argentine poet. Everything that had happened with his mother and father had become such a part of him that, as he grew older, he began to forget it all. What he used to try to forget, he now tried to remember. As soon as he woke up, Mr. G would open any page of the book he had written years ago, which lay by his bedside, and start reading. After a while, he wanted to recall his memories without reading the book. Sometimes he succeeded, and the next morning he would mentally plan to try recalling without the book again.

Why had he written all those words—was it to avoid forgetting? Would it really help? Or, when the time came, would the DNAs deep inside him, whose workings he had never truly understood, play the same deadly game they played on everyone else and make him forget everything forever? Would the words of those who cheered him on, telling him “Don’t be so gloomy” and constantly singing “Come on, you’re fine” suddenly be shattered by the instructions released by the APOE gene, the one responsible for Alzheimer’s?

He did not want to forget what he had said at the beginning of the book about forgetting. He was aware of how, at the start, he praised forgetting, first with the command “forget,” and now, with a subheading, “remember.” When young, it was easy to tell himself to forget while recalling everything, necessary or not. But now everything had changed. He was so old that he now feared forgetting, falling prey to that cursed disease. Perhaps in the future, people would say about him, “He was fine when he wrote that book, but…”

In this reckoning, he had to ask himself the question he had never yet realized or brought to mind. What had he inherited from his mother and father? No money remained—only the dilapidated, single-story white house where now Syrians lived. Though he expected the fear of being penniless to decrease as he aged, it had not; it had grown. He had not properly cared for the genetic legacy inherited from his ancestors. But even if he had, what difference would it have made…

How had his father died?
From Alzheimer’s.
How had his mother died?
From Alzheimer’s.

And he—was he independent of these matters? How far could he escape these realities by taking refuge in words? He was uneasy, anxious, afraid that the instructions written in the deep wells of his body might stir. He constantly read about the APOE gene:

"This gene provides instructions for making a protein called apolipoprotein E. This protein combines with fats in the body to form molecules called lipoproteins. Lipoproteins are responsible for packaging cholesterol and other fats and transporting them through the bloodstream."

Instructions written in a place too small for the mind to grasp, in a language he did not know… The packaging of fats and their transport in the bloodstream…

The gene had three types: APOE e2 reduced Alzheimer's risk, APOE e3 had no effect, and APOE e4 increased the risk. What difference would meddling with this make? What could he change? Knowing would only frighten him more.

He had started this endeavor with Toni Morrison's words: "If there's a book you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it yourself." He had written the book he wanted to read and was nearing the end. He had distracted himself with the book for a while, telling people here and there, "If my grandchildren want to understand my life, this book will suffice." Yet he did not know under what conditions his grandchildren would live in the future, nor whether they would even want to learn about the details of his life. He could not admit to himself that all this effort merely kept himself from boredom.

He got up to drink a glass of water, watched the street from the window, looked at the unfinished construction across the way. He had only conveyed what had happened to some extent and, as always, failed to decipher the meaning of events. With his small brain, he should not attempt tasks beyond his reach. Whether he had enough time left for new projects was already uncertain. Somewhere in his body, new instructions could be released at any moment. Horses galloping across lush green fields passed before his eyes.

Winter had cast its shadows over the dream garden in which he wandered.

He could not remember what he had buried in the toy cemetery of the family garden.

What if he changed the name of *Mom, Dad, and Me*…